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THE OFFICIAL GAMES MAGAZINE OF BEST BUY

ISSUE 03 | OCTOBER 2010

NAME DECLASSIFIED

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

We declassify the latest in the Call of Duty franchise. Can you say "epic multiplayer?" PG.46

Playstation Move

We get down and dirty with Sony's new controller PG. 90

iPad Gaming

The newest and hottest iPad games broken down PG.16

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock

The series that started it all gets a much needed facelift PG. 74

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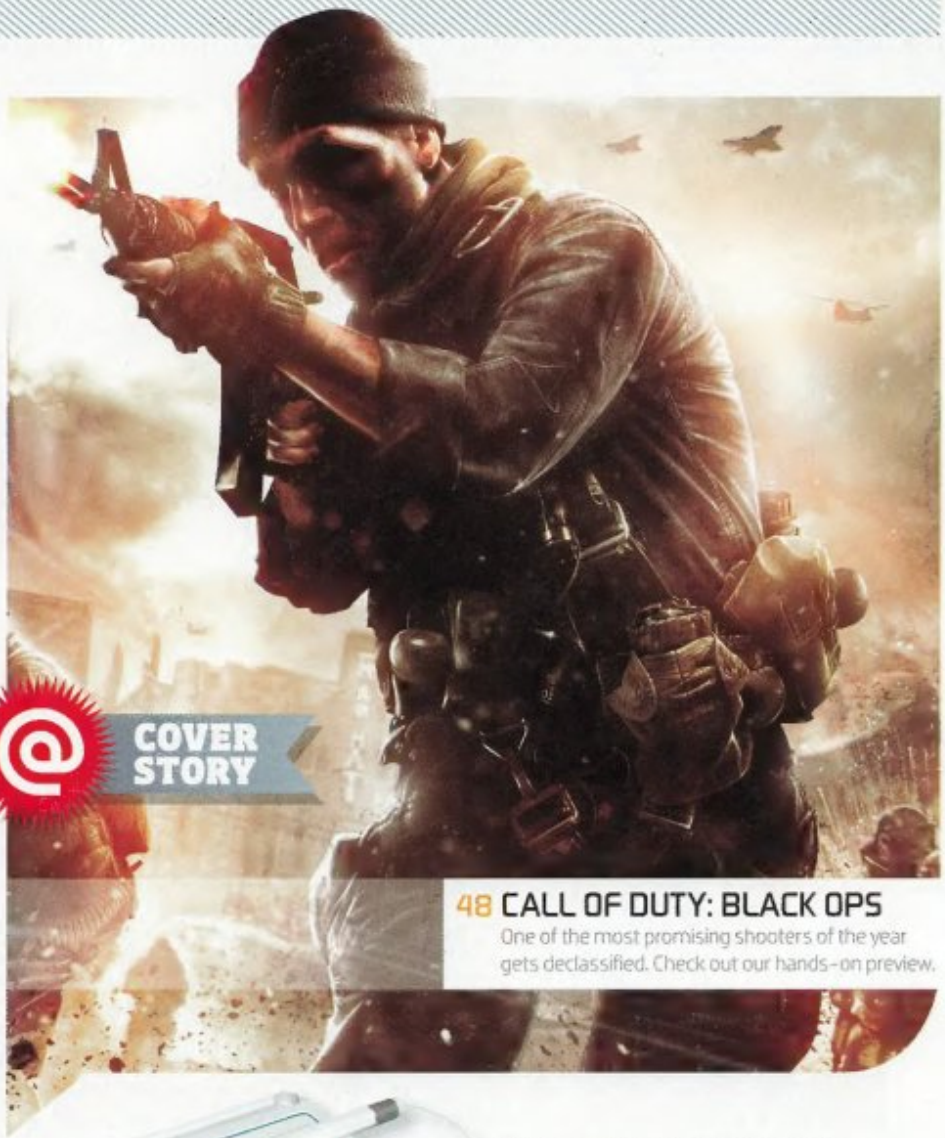

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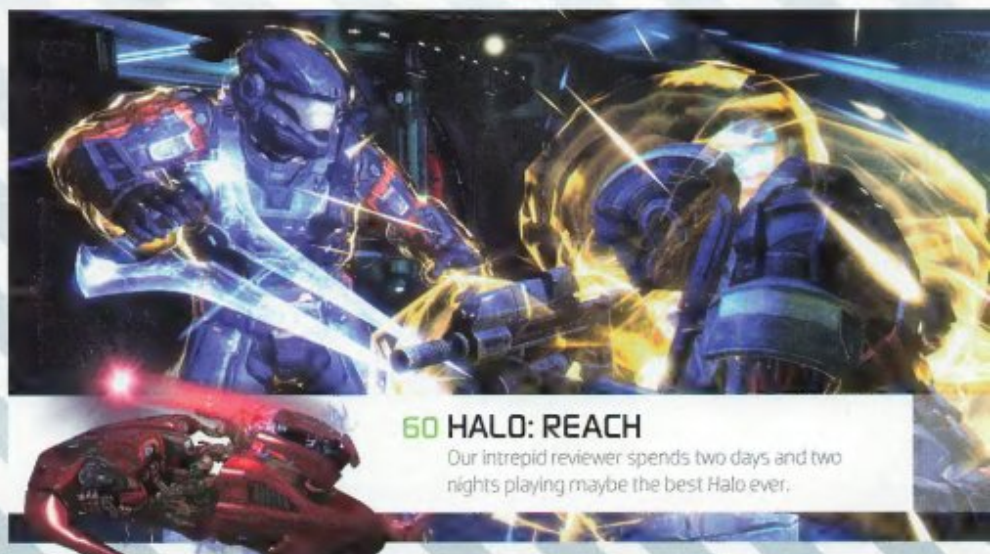
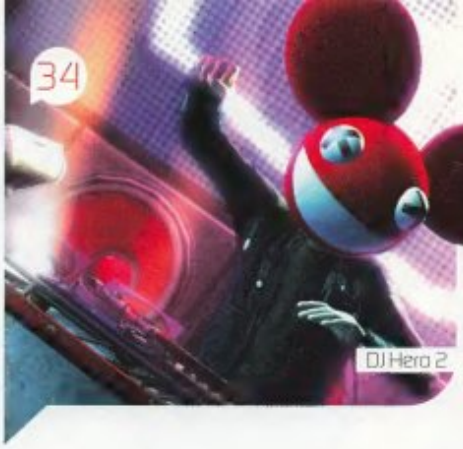


60 **HALO: REACH**
Our intrepid reviewer spends two days and two nights playing maybe the best Halo ever.



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20 Rock Band 3
With new instruments, new songs, and new play modes, the venerable *Rock Band* franchise gets a major facelift.

24 Crysis 2
Nano suit? Check. 3D? Check. Weapons galore? Check. Boasting huge worlds, and awesome technology, *Crysis 2* shows a lot of promise. Be sure to check out our hands-on preview.

28 Deus Ex 3
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34 DJ Hero 2
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37 DC Universe Online
Become a superhero and save the world in this highly anticipated MMO.

38 Sonic the Hedgehog 4
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40 Splatterhouse
The arcade classic gets revamped in this heavy metal infused, blood-filled romp through a very...um...troubled mansion.

42 Enslaved: Odyssey to The West
With a brutish "hero" named Monkey and his sexy, yet devious sidekick Trip, Enslaved promises intriguing gameplay and great graphics.

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Featuring 10 of the best games for Apple's touch-screen wonder.

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With 6,000 years to get through, expect some long nights.

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MEET THE STAFF

Wil O'Neal Editor-in-Chief
Wil is amazed that his staff doesn't hate him yet, because he keeps changing his deadlines on the editorial tracker. See, Wil likes to think of deadlines as targets that you...you know...sort of aim for.

Andy Eddy Executive Editor
No matter how crazy things get around here during crunch time, Andy always seems to have a level head on his shoulders. We're thinking about testing whatever is in that Thermos on his desk.

Jenny Esdaile Art Director
Wil learned a valuable lesson this month: Never confuse an Aussie with a Kiwi. Being from Sydney, Jenny took offense to Wil's Kiwi reference. The bruises will serve as a permanent reminder.

Jillian Pierce Designer
Jillian is so gung-ho that she took on designing tasks for multiple magazines this month. But, everytime we saw her working on something other than @GAMER, it felt like she was cheating on us.

Letter from the EDITOR

WELCOME TO @GAMER

If you're reading this, you probably saw the *Call of Duty: Black Ops* preview that was redacted last month. Well, in the spirit of transparency—and in keeping with the Freedom of Information Act—we've decided to declassify that story, as well as some more juicy tidbits that @GAMER managed to squeeze out of the folks at Treyarch on our recent visit to their studio in Santa Monica, California.

Call of Duty: Black Ops looked great when we got to see it at E3. The thing is, though, Treyarch and Activision were being tight-lipped about one of the game's most appealing aspects: multiplayer. Not anymore. They recently held a multiplayer gamers' day, where we got to spend the day playing all of the game's multiplayer modes, several of the levels, and pick the brains of the producers.

Needless to say, it looks as though the folks at Treyarch listened to what the CoD community had to say and is well on its way to shaking that Infinity Ward monkey off its back.

But enough about that...let's get to the fun stuff. We're super-stoked to be done with the third issue of @GAMER and we're pleased that, not only are you all continuing to enjoy the mag, but this baby gets more fun to make with each issue. So, sit back, enjoy Issue 3, have fun with those coupons, and don't hesitate to drop us a line to let us know what's on your mind.

William O'Neal
Editor In Chief

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I just had to write and say I am very impressed by the quality of your magazine. After reading this issue, I immediately signed up for 20 more and eagerly wait to see what comes next. The tie-in with Best Buy is not an "in your face" sort of thing; it's more of a bonus that doesn't detract from the unbiased nature of the previews/reviews. Keep up the good work and you will make a long-term subscriber out of me.

—James via e-mail

ED: We'll do just that, James, and hope you'll remain a satisfied subscriber.

Just wanted to say congrats on the new magazine. I just got done reading it and I was amazed!! What an awesome magazine! I already went online and signed up for a subscription. Looking forward to more issues! Congrats and kudos to everyone at @GAMER!

—John via e-mail

ED: That's what we like to hear. Much appreciated, John.

Hey guys, I just wanted to tell you all that I have subscribed to many game magazines over the years (and still do), but when I was in my local Best Buy the other day, I saw a brand new game magazine, @GAMER. I couldn't resist...I quickly opened it up, flipped through it and knew I had to buy it. @GAMER blew my other magazines away. I took your magazine home and went right to work. I read this issue from front to back. Flawless is what came to mind. Great stories, reviews are spot on, and when you're explaining something, you make it so easy for everyone to understand what you're saying...not to mention the coupons! (Thank you.)

You guys should be very proud of yourselves. You have made one heck of a game magazine for us to enjoy. Thank you and keep up the good work. I can't wait for my next issue.

—Courtney via e-mail

ED: "Easy to read" is one of the concepts we've focused on in creating @GAMER, so it's great to have a reader point that out. Glad we're connecting with you and we hope you'll be back for more.

I've heard that Ninja Theory is developing a game called Enslaved. I really loved their previous game, Heavenly Swords, and I'm hoping I'll like the new one is as much. Do you know anything about it?

—Vincent via e-mail

ED: Well, perfect timing for you to ask. The issue of @GAMER that you're holding has a preview of Enslaved: Odyssey to the West (see page 42), which should give you a bit more background on what the game will be about. Namco Bandai will be publishing Enslaved, and it's scheduled to be released on October 5.

Hi there. I'm curious how a magazine like @GAMER gets games early? My friend and I have a blog about games, and we'd like to do early reviews also.

—Davey via e-mail

ED: The console makers provide us with "debug" systems, which are what developers use to create games. They operate much like a system you'd buy at the store, but don't generally play store-bought discs. Instead, they run special pre-release versions called "builds" that publishers send us before release, so we can get timely articles into the magazine. Debugs and builds are in short supply, and only go out to well-established writers and outlets, so it might be hard for a small blog to get on that list. Stick with it and build your audience.

SURVEY:
And while you're at it, we'd love it if you would participate in this quick survey to tell us what you think of @GAMER: http://tiny.cc/FirstToKnow.

ENSLAVED
Ninja Theory is readying its second game, due out on October 5.

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WANT TO HAVE YOUR SAY?

What are you playing now? Do you like it? Do you hate it? Let the other @GAMER readers know what you think—send in a short 50- to 100-word review to reviews@atgamermagazine.com, and we'll repost some of them here each issue.

Submit your review to:
reviews@atgamermagazine.com

If you're starving for an RPG to play and are on a tight budget, Arc Rise Fantasia for Nintendo Wii is a good choice. The game is easy to get into and offers tons of customization. The graphic style and music are top-notch, but you might want to turn the voices off.

—"Silvercube"

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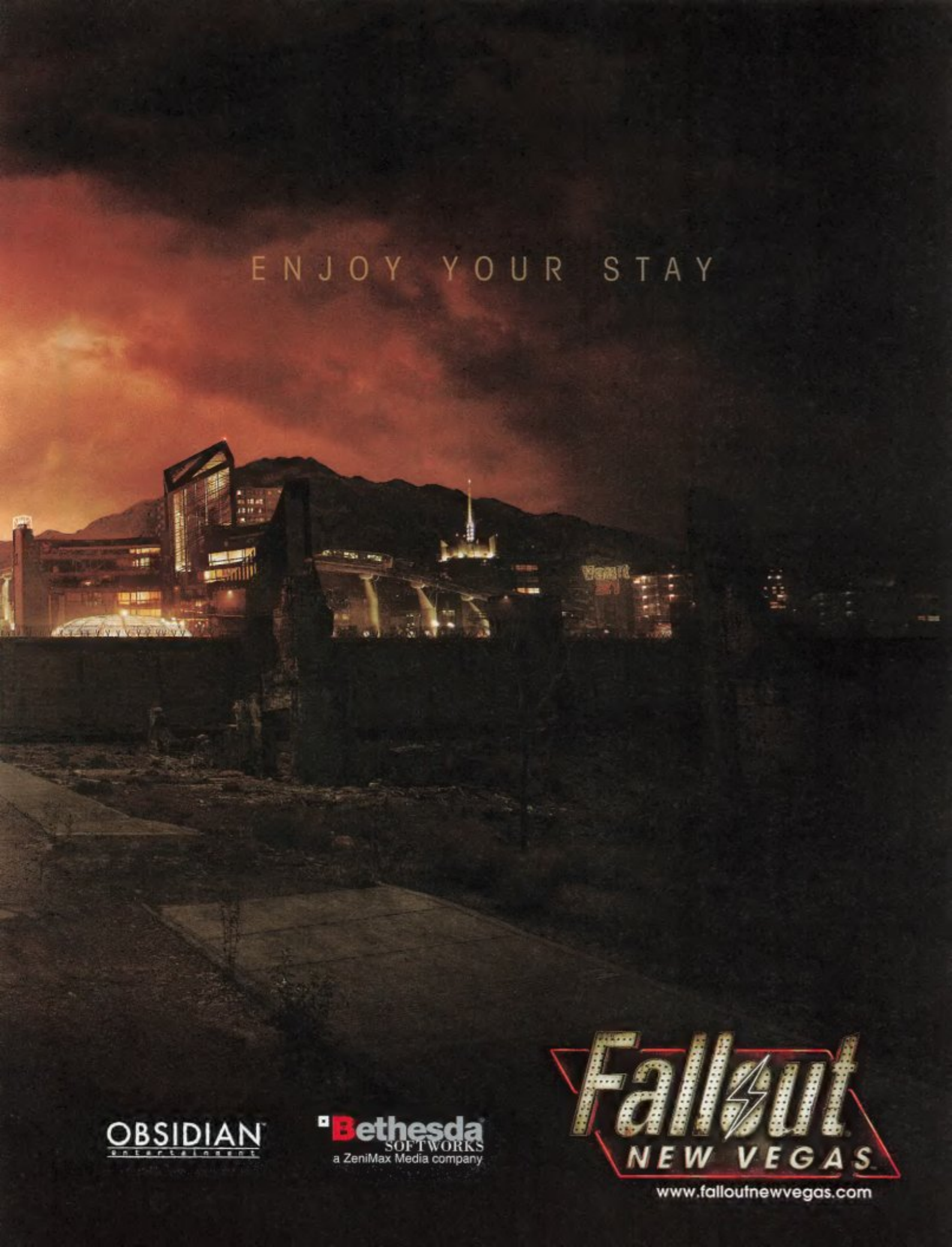
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XBOX LIVE MOBILE?

Microsoft preps Xbox Live for Windows Phone 7 mobile devices

Microsoft was never going to sit idly by as iPhone and Android evolved into legitimate mobile-gaming platforms. The Redmond, Washington-based company recently announced that Windows Phone 7 mobile devices will boast support for Xbox Live.

In a nutshell, Windows Phone 7 devices will feature an Xbox Live Games hub where you can do everything from connect to your Xbox Live avatar (or even create one, if you're without), stay connected with friends by seeing which games and platforms they're playing and what achievements they've unlocked, earn and view your own achievements, message your friends, and even challenge others to multiplayer matches.

A few of the titles are original companions that will extend the Xbox

According to Marc Whitten, Microsoft's corporate vice president of Xbox Live, "Windows Phone 7 takes a different approach to handheld gaming, utilizing Xbox Live, Microsoft Game Studios, leading game publishers, and innovative indie developers, to create powerful, shared experiences for everyone."

The feature is only as awesome as the games, publishers, and developers to which it's attached, and so far the following outfits have announced support: Gameloft, Konami Digital Entertainment, Namco Bandai, PopCap, and THQ. A few of the more notable games that have been announced are *Guitar Hero 5* by Glu Mobile; *Assassin's Creed* and *Splinter Cell Conviction* by Gameloft; and *Castlevania* by Konami. While many of the games will be fully playable mobile versions of their "big brothers," a few of the titles, such as *Halo: Waypoint* and *Crackdown 2: Project Sunburst*, are original companions that Microsoft hopes will extend the Xbox 360 experience.

BIOSHOCK INFINITE [REVEALED]

Irrational Games leaves the sea for the sky

Following a trailer cleverly teasing a return trip to BioShock's utopia gone wrong, Irrational Games' Ken Levine revealed BioShock Infinite, a title that will actually take gamers high above the soggy society to a soaring city dubbed Columbia. "I can't talk about this new game without talking about the city of Columbia. Unlike Rapture, it's not a secret underwater city constructed in silence and hidden from the world; it was constructed in the broad daylight in early 1900s America as an example of the success of America's ingenuity and democratic system," explained Levine. Just as Rapture was as much a character as the Big Daddies and Little Sisters roaming its flooded halls, Columbia plays a defining role in BioShock Infinite. A sharp contrast from Rapture's dark, claustrophobic confines, Columbia's a wide-open, sun-soaked fantasy world. But not all is what it seems in the cloud-sitting city. "Turns out Columbia's not just a flying World's Fair; it's a Death Star," says Levine.

As private detective Booker DeWitt, you'll be recruited to go to Columbia and rescue a mysterious woman named Elizabeth. During our brief demo, DeWitt arrived to find a turn-of-the-century town brimming with patriotism. But among the bursting red-white-and-blue vibe are dead horses lying in the cobble-stoned streets and buildings engulfed by blazing fires.

While Levine revealed little more than this disturbing setting, he did tease some gameplay ideas. Using Plasmid-like powers, DeWitt can unleash flocks of attacking crows and telepathically strip enemies of their weapons. And Elizabeth, possessing her own inhuman powers, can assist him in battle. The coolest display saw her conjuring a storm cloud just before he shot it with lightning. (You can guess what happened to the baddies standing beneath this makeshift force of nature.) If all this didn't get us counting the days to Infinite's 2012 release, a towering cyborg—one that could make a Big Daddy quake in his dive-boots—attacking DeWitt and Elizabeth during the demo's conclusion certainly did.

POSTCARDS FROM EDGES

▲ Irrational's knack for creating atmospheric locales should get a proper workout once again.

▲ That's quite a step! You can bet a lot of enemies are gonna take it by the time you've finished the game.

BEHOLD, THE UDRAW GAMETABLET FOR Wii

THQ recently announced a drawing tablet as well as several games that will use the accessory

Just in time for the holiday season, THQ announced a new gaming peripheral for Wii, the uDraw. A relatively simple device, the uDraw is a 4"x6" handheld tablet that acts as a virtual drawing space. Shipping with a detachable, pressure-sensitive pen (or stylus), the uDraw Gametablet interfaces with the Wii Remote via a dock that allows the uDraw to draw power directly from the controller. The uDraw also boasts an SD-card expansion slot that enables would-be digital artists to save their masterpieces.

According to THQ, the uDraw Gametablet will come bundled with a game called *uDraw Studio* for $69.99. Based on the device's looks and THQ's press materials, the device is definitely aimed at younger gamers and families.

Additionally, THQ has announced two more games that will be available on launch day, *Pictionary* and *Dood's Big Adventure*, which will retail for $29.99 each. *Pictionary* shows promise as it's a small-scale, digital version of the game we already know, but with added features and gameplay modes. *Dood's Big Adventure* definitely skews a bit younger as the game requires players to complete coloring book-type levels in order to advance.

THQ's announced two more games for launch day

While the launch titles tend to be extremely casual, it remains to be seen if other developers will choose to create software for this innovative device. Our collective fingers are crossed.

HEY MR. DJ

@GAMER Gets Down at Activision's "Hero" Party

Activision recently held a party in San Francisco showcasing *DJ Hero 2* (p. 54) and *Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock* (p. 74). Being fans of both games (and free sushi and booze), @GAMER's editors weren't gonna miss out. Both games were available on demo stations, as were some of the game's talent. Most notably, DJ Qbert and the guys behind Mixcrate.com were on hand, talking about the game and DJ culture.

▲ Fans will welcome the fact that the original controller is still in use.

▼ @GAMER'S Andy Eddy (left) and Activision's Dan Amrich get down to "Bohemian Rhapsody."

▲ Players were into *DJ Hero 2*'s new features.

▲ DJ Qbert and @GAMER EIC Will O'Neal talk music.

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Pittsburgh: Store #584, Rocky Bleier

EVENTS YOU CAN'T MISS!

Ready, set, hike! Madden NFL 11 debuts in style

Ten cities in one day? That's how Best Buy celebrated the release of EA Sports' Madden NFL 11 on August 10th. Taking place in NYC, Philadelphia, Indianapolis, Boston, Denver, Dallas, Chicago, and Minneapolis, fans of both the Madden series of football games and the NFL in general were given a unique opportunity to get hands-on with Madden NFL 11. The game's demo stations were manned by former Madden champions who were on hand to school gamers in gaming "training camps" so that they would be in the best position to dominate their buddies at home and online. Fans also competed against each other for NFL Tickets, Best Buy gift cards, and the game itself. A few notable players on hand were Floyd Little, Randy White, and Mike McKenzie of the champion New Orleans Saints.

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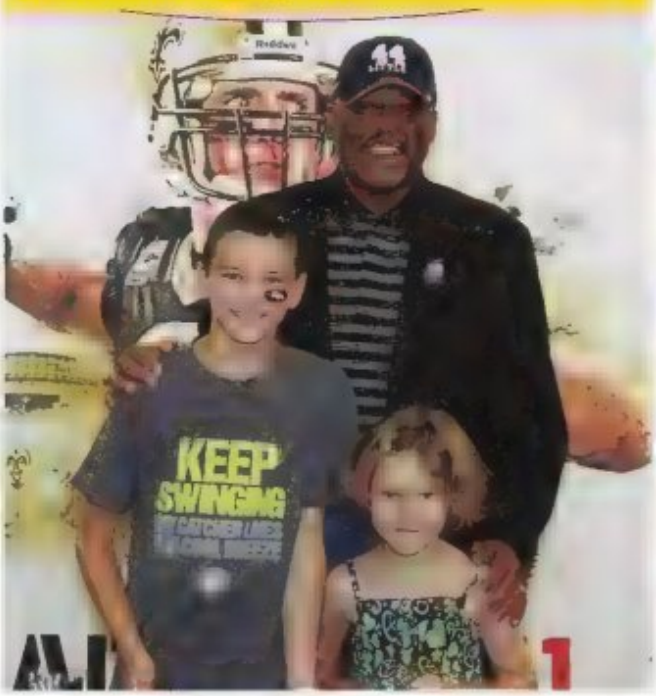

▲ Free stuff and pretty girls? We're there. Coca-Cola was on hand passing out free Coke Zero to the attendees.

▲ Would-be *Madden* champs got some hands-on time with the game as well as tips from previous *Madden* champs.

Dallas Ft. Worth: Store #202, Randy White

FUN WITH NIKOLEZ

LET'S DISH!

@GAMER's resident girl about town dishes about downloadable time-wasters, funky gear in their natural habitat, and online games

TOP 5

WHAT I'M PLAYING, DOWNLOADABLE EDITION

05.
Alien Swarm (Steam)
Alien Swarm is a top-down shooter from the kings of shooters themselves, Valve. You and three other people can team up to defeat wave after wave with over 40 weapons. Oh, and did I mention it's free? It's free!

04.
Limbo (XBLA)
Limbo is the puzzle-platformer debut of Playdead Studios, a 2D side-scrolling game in a monochromatic world where you must help a boy through the afterlife. It's a serene, trippy, and often eerie gaming experience.

03.
DeathSpank (PSN, XBLA)
DeathSpank is the latest brainchild from game designer Ron Gilbert (*Monkey Island*, *Maniac Mansion*). If you like *Diablo* then *DeathSpank* is for you. Customization, hundreds of weapons and three difficulty levels bring casual and hardcore appeal.

02.
Castle Crashers (PSN, XBLA)
Castle Crashers has been a megahit on Xbox 360 for two years now but has just landed on PSN. It's a wacky, side-scrolling beat-em up with plenty of RPG elements. Play with friends!

01.
Scott Pilgrim vs. The World: The Game (PSN, XBLA)
By now I'm sure you've seen the movie and even read the books, so why not complete the media trifecta and play the game? *Scott Pilgrim* is a retro beat-em-up channeling *River City Ransom*. Coins, power-ups, and even a cheat code to unlock zombies, this game has it all.

This Month I saw...

San Diego Comic-Con

COMIC-CON has been affectionately dubbed "nerd mecca," and for good reason. Thousands of trekkies, gamers, cosplayers and role-players come from all over the world to attend San Diego Comic-Con. The mass amount of geeks also means mass amounts of advertising, promotional events, and parties. For an esteemed—I use the word lightly—member of the press such as myself, these events mean VIP access to the latest and greatest games and movies. One of my favorite exhibitions was the Scott Pilgrim Experience. Located in front of the convention center, "The Experience" let visitors get free t-shirts, play the game, and even meet the actors from the movie. They also had a booth set up where you could make your own comic-style flip book. Any event that lets me customize a Sex Bomb t-shirt and meet Jason Schwartzman is a-okay by me.

◀ He Looks Angry (L) Michael Cera was present in spirit... and cardboard.

◀ An Evil Ex (R) As you can see, NikoleZ is strong with the Schwartz.

Tips: Buy new games right from your couch

Your typical console game will run you about $64.99 after tax, and may offer as little as six hours of gameplay, not counting multiplayer. But sometimes you feel like spending less and playing less. If you're in the mood for a new gaming experience, look no further than XBLA, PSN, WiiWare, and Steam. For those who don't know what those clusters of letters mean: XBLA is Xbox Live Arcade, and all you need is a (free) Xbox Silver account and an internet connection to download a plethora of games right to your Xbox 360. The PSN, or PlayStation Network, is the same thing but for you guessed it, your PlayStation 3. WiiWare is the equivalent for the Wii, and Steam is a popular service that lets you download hundreds of games to your PC or Mac. Xbox Live, PlayStation Network, and Nintendo Points cards can be found in stores like Best Buy. All services let you pay for games directly with a credit card, and each offers hundreds of old, new, and indie games with prices ranging from $20 to free. Just make sure you have enough hard drive space!

Got a few bucks?

▲ Digital media galore with Sony's PSN.

▲ The Xbox Live Arcade dashboard.

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PRESTIGE EDITION

HARDENED EDITION

MATURE 17+
M
Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Strong Language
ESRB

treyarch

ACTIVISION.

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Featured Game:

IPAD'S KILLER AP?

Madden NFL 11 looks closer to the console games than any portable version yet. Well played, EA.

Multitouch lets you draw multiple routes at once.

MADDEN NFL 11
BY EA SPORTS FOR IPAD

$12.99
Electronic Arts, ea.com/pad

The iPad is absolutely ready for some football, and *Madden NFL 11* delivers, with touch-screen controls that make this gaming dynasty, dare we say, accessible. You can draw custom routes for your receivers or defenders, tap a receiver to pass to him, and use the slow-mo Action Control Time to execute juke and spin moves. Movement is handled with an onscreen analog stick, and the rest of the buttons change whether you're on offense or defense—color-coding of receiver icons even lets you see who's open at a glance.

Of course this all comes wrapped in classic EA Sports eye-candy graphics and an insane amount of detail, down to a wind-speed reading on the coin toss screen. The tutorials make it easier for a non-*Madden* junkie to pick up, but EA crammed in enough to keep series veterans happy too—well, except for multiplayer and "Vintage Voltage" modes, which are still "coming soon" at press time.

Paid Games:

they're not too tough on

MADDEN NFL 11 DELIVERS, WITH TOUCH SCREEN CONTROLS THAT MAKE THIS GAMING DYNASTY ACCESIBLE.

Pretend you're in Shaq's basement.

NBA HOTSHOT HD

$2.99
Freeverse, freeverse.com

Pick this up if you miss playing Pop-A-Shot at the pizza parlor. You flick the screen to shoot four balls at the hoop in two 40-second rounds—the basket scoots farther away for Round 2. Finding the perfect touch can be tricky, but once you find it, it's a great feeling... but then they move the hoop on you. Collectible NBA and WNBA awards add to the game's replayability, as does Bluetooth multiplayer for up to five ballin' iPad enthusiasts.

In a game this bizarre, this screen is typical.

MUSHROOM AGE HD

$4.99
G5 Entertainment, g5e.com

This point-and-click adventure's patently ridiculous story involves time-travel, holograms, friendly dinosaurs, and nefarious sentient mushrooms who are probably just misunderstood. But its 23 chapters are packed with puzzles—finding hidden objects, completing electronic circuits, unscrambling words, assembling items, beating card games, solving physics puzzles, and other brainteasers—so we kept tapping our way through the detailed environments to see what weird thing would happen next.

Tap the Best Word button for help.

SCRABBLE FOR IPAD

$9.99
Electronic Arts, ea.com/ipad

If turn-based games like Words With Friends are a bit too slow for you, Scrabble lets you play speedy matches versus the computer, as well as pass-and-play, online matches against your Facebook friends, and local-network games. The gimmicky Party Play mode even turns the iPad into a game board, while you and your pals flick letters over from the tile racks on your iPhones or iPod touches. In that case maybe you all should just break out the board game.

Tilt to run. Tap to jump. Try not to die.

THE INCIDENT

$1.99
Big Bucket Software,
bigbucketsoftware.com

The sky isn't falling, but things are falling from the sky—big things, like mailboxes and Smart Cars. And you have to survive, scrambling out of the way until the debris rises past each checkpoint. *The Incident*'s 8-bit style, helpful power-ups, and adorable trophies (showing how high the stack got and what object finally killed you) make it super-addictive, and it's Universal, so you get a native iPhone version too.

Be the master of your own watery domain.

HARBOR MASTER HD

Free
Imangi Studios,
imangistudios.com

Similar to *Flight Control HD*, *Harbor Master* has you directing incoming ships to color-coded docks without letting them collide. The twist is that once the docked ships are unloaded, you have to send 'em back out to clear space for more ships—juggling incoming and outgoing ships gets hectic pretty quick. You get one map for free, and four more are available as 99-cent in-app purchases. Maybe you should buy life preservers, too.

▼ Doin' the wooden ducky yeran

ZEN BOUND 2 UNIVERSAL

$2.99 (Universal)
Secret Exit, secretexit.com

Wrapping a piece of string around a wooden object doesn't sound like much of a compelling game, but *Zen Bound 2* creates a real sense of tension (no pun intended, mostly) as you push the object around in 3D space trying to cover as much of the object's surface area with string as you can. The visuals are gorgeous, the soundtrack is lovely, and it's Universal so you can play it on your iPhone or iPod touch. Inner peace, alas, is not included.

▼ You shoot. Will you score?

DEADBALL SPECIALIST HD

$1.99
Full Fat,
deadball-specialist.com

The World Cup is over, but *Deadball Specialist HD* keeps the thrill of soccer—and Americans' natural aversion to tie games—alive. It's basically a free-kick simulator, placing targets over corners of the goal for you to aim at. Tilt the iPad to aim, and bend your kicks by adding topspin and backspin with the onscreen kick control. Quickfire and five levels of Challenge mode give you plenty to shoot for.

Entertain thyself, child.

KID GAMES

10 FOR THE KIDS

KIDS LOVE THE IPAD, AND IF YOU KEEP TELLING THEM THEY CAN'T USE IT THEY'LL CRY. SO LOAD UP A FEW OF THESE FUN, FAMILY-FRIENDLY APPS AND MAKE THE ANKLE-BITERS HAPPY.

01 **FRUIT MEMORY HD** $0.99, paulmayne.org
This charming card-matching game supports up to four players on one iPad—great for a minivan. Cute graphics and sounds, too.

02 **KID ART FOR IPAD** $0.99, gpapps.com
Kids can combine their own finger drawings with bright backgrounds and colorful clip art, then save their creations in the iPad's photo library. No reading required.

03 **I HEAR EWE** free, claireware.com
Toddlers can tap a farm animal, jungle animal, or vehicle to hear the noise it makes. It's a free universal app, with native versions for iPad and iPhone.

04 **WORDSEARCH UNLIMITED HD FREE** free, virtuesoft.com
Pretend you're a substitute teacher and give 'em some busywork: Finding words hidden in a grid of letters. The $1.99 version has more puzzles and no ads.

05 **TRAIN CONDUCTOR 2: USA** $0.99, trainconductorusa.com
Send numbered trains to their correct tracks, without letting them collide. Difficulty ramps up quickly; it might be too tricky for kids under 6.

06 **KID MUSICAL WONDER** $1.99, beansprites.com
Three pianos, a xylophone, and bongos will keep your kid wailin' for hours—in a good way. Also includes animal sounds and two tilt-control minigames.

07 **PAC-MAN LITE FOR IPAD** free, namcogames.com
It was a classic of your childhood, so why not theirs, too? Choose swipe, joystick, or tilt controls and chomp an extra life at 10,000 points. The full version is $4.99.

08 **DREAMS HD** $1.99, greyhoundgames.com
A good calm-down-before-bed option, this game has players scrutinizing side-by-side paintings for subtle differences. Soothing music and a hint button help.

09 **COSMO KID HD** $0.99, thecosmokid.com
Draw rubber bands with your fingers to flick the Cosmo Kid farther and farther into space. Everyone in the family will want to get the high score.

10 **ACCORDEON** $3.99, accordion.akamarov.com
It's not so much a game as a digital accordion kids can jam away on—way less annoying than a virtual drum machine. Send 'em out to busk for their college funds.

CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
EVENTS MIDNIGHT OPENINGS: MEDAL OF HONOR On-Sale Date: Oct 12 FALLOUT: NEW VEGAS On-Sale Date: Oct 19 STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED 2 FABLE III On-Sale Date: Oct 26 Doors open at 12:01 a.m. Make sure to get in line Monday night! Check: www.bestbuy.com/gamingevents BEST BUY IN-STORE DEMOS DJ HERO 2 Starting Oct 10 JUST DANCE 2 Starting Oct 3						02
03 • Wii PARTY	04 • POKÉMON RANGER: Guardian Signs	05 • BEN 10: Ultimate Alien • CASTLEVANIA: Lords of Shadow • DEF JAM RAPSTAR • ENSLAVED: Odyssey to the West • FINAL FANTASY: The 4 Heroes of Light • NBA 2K11 • NBA ELITE 11 • NBA JAM • TWO WORLDS II	06	07 JENNY'S B'DAY Can I have the day off?	08	09
10	11 COLUMBUS DAY	12 • ARCANIA: Gothic IV (Xbox 360, PC) • DISNEY SING IT PARTY HITS • JUST DANCE 2 • LUCHA LIBRE AAA: Heroes del Ring • MEDAL OF HONOR • SUPER SCRIBBLENAUTS	13	14	15	16 SEE PAGE 42!
17 • KIRBY'S EPIC YARN	18	19 • DJ HERO 2 • EA SPORTS MMA • FALLOUT: New Vegas • NAIL'D • NARUTO SHIPPUDEN: Ultimate Ninja Storm 2 • POWER GIG • SAW II: Flesh & Blood	20	21	22	23
24 HALLOWEEN Get your spooky games out! 31	25 • ART ACADEMY	26 • FABLE III • LEGO UNIVERSE • ROCK BAND 3 • STAR WARS: The Force Unleashed II • THE SIMS 3 • TONY HAWK: Shred • WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2011	27 SEE PAGE 54!	28	29	30

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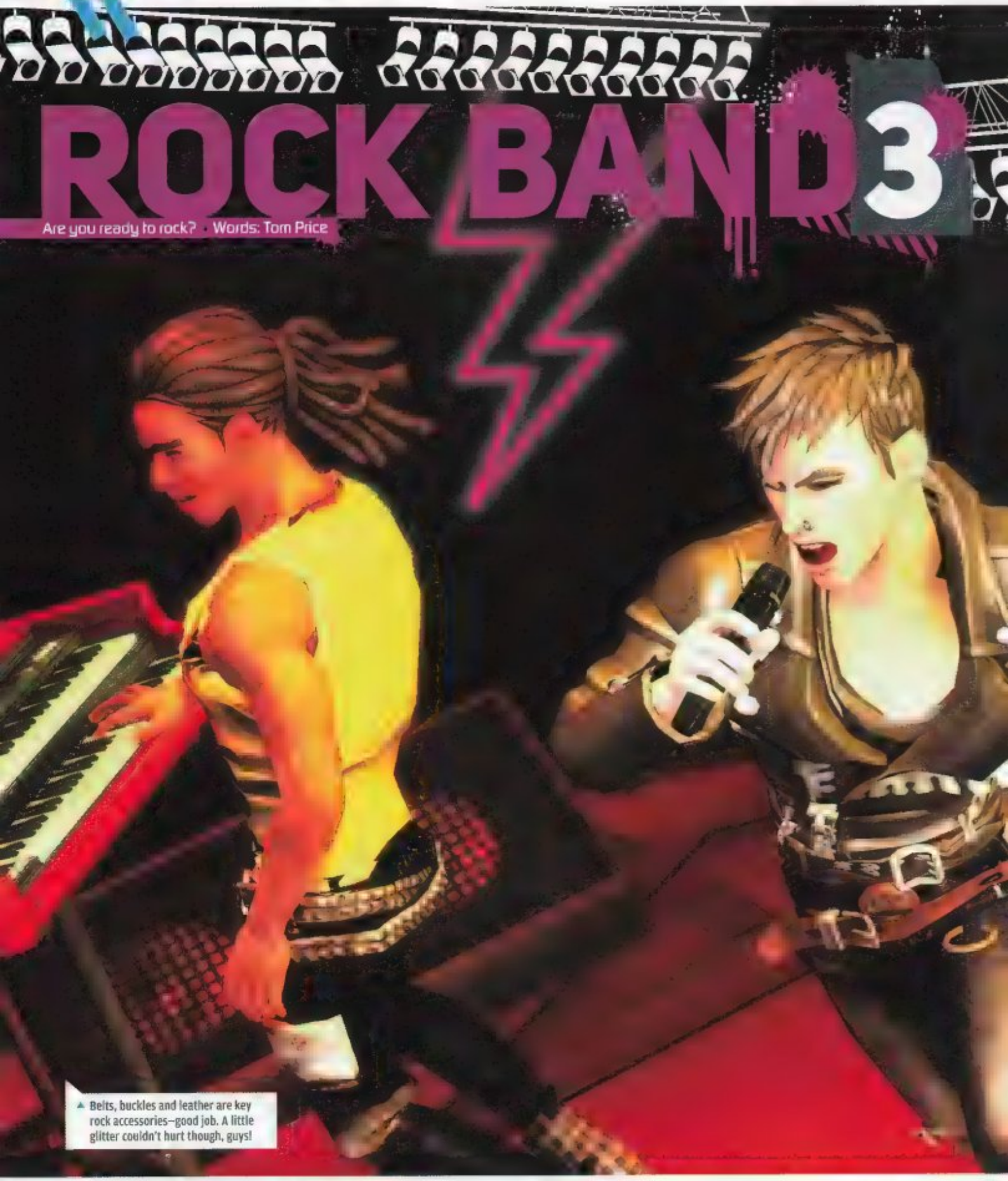
ROCK BAND 3

Are you ready to rock? · Words: Tom Price



▲ Belts, buckles and leather are key rock accessories—good job. A little glitter couldn't hurt though, guys!

PS3 XBOX 360

GAME DETAILS

HANDS-ON

ROCK BAND 3

INFO
Publisher: MTV Games
Developer: Harmonix
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 7 players

GENRE
Music

RELEASE DATE
October 26, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Those who are about to rock, those who are currently rocking

BEST BUY

All of you music game naysayers who complain that fans of *Rock Band*, *Guitar Hero*, and their ilk should learn to play real-life instruments, prepare to eat your words. *Rock Band 3* from developer Harmonix will give you the opportunity to play in an entirely new and more realistic way, perhaps even revealing the great guitar gods of tomorrow.

Fans of the game will still be able to play it the way they've always played *Rock Band*, with the same plastic guitars and drum kits they invested in long ago. But those looking for a new challenge, or who were just waiting for keyboards to finally, rightfully, be added to the game, will want to save their ducats to buy all the awesome new gear that *Rock Band 3* will support.

New instruments, and a new realistic way to play, are not the only improvements to this edition of the best band simulator out there. While the basic gameplay concept of hitting the right notes at the right time remains unchanged, a lot of enhancements have been made to the way you experience the game's progression. Now there is more of a narrative behind your highly customizable band, and your skills win you fans, unlocking more songs and custom items for your characters as you play. The big change is that you'll progress no matter what mode you play in, by yourself or with your bandmates, by completing specific gameplay challenges.

If you're a longtime *Rock Band* fanatic and have downloaded tons of your favorite tracks that didn't make the boxed edition, you'll still be able to play those songs in *Rock Band 3*—just not in Pro mode or with keyboards. Going back and putting all those parts in would have taken hundreds of hours of work by the developers. As a compromise, they will go back and add keyboards to the tunes that people are screaming for, but you will likely have to buy those tracks again to get the new playable parts.

It's clear that developing *Rock Band* is a labor of love for the folks who do it; they're game developers as well as musicians, and their love of music really shows. *Rock Band 3* is the biggest upgrade the series has yet seen, and still closer to the game makers' original vision, which was to make players feel like real-life rock stars. Groupies and green M&Ms, however, are still not included.

IT'S CLEAR THAT *ROCK BAND* IS A LABOR OF LOVE FOR HARMONIX

▲ Alas, you won't be able to control your character's crazy keytar faces.

▲ Despite the many additions *Rock Band* vets should feel right at home.

GAMEPLAY

LET'S JAM

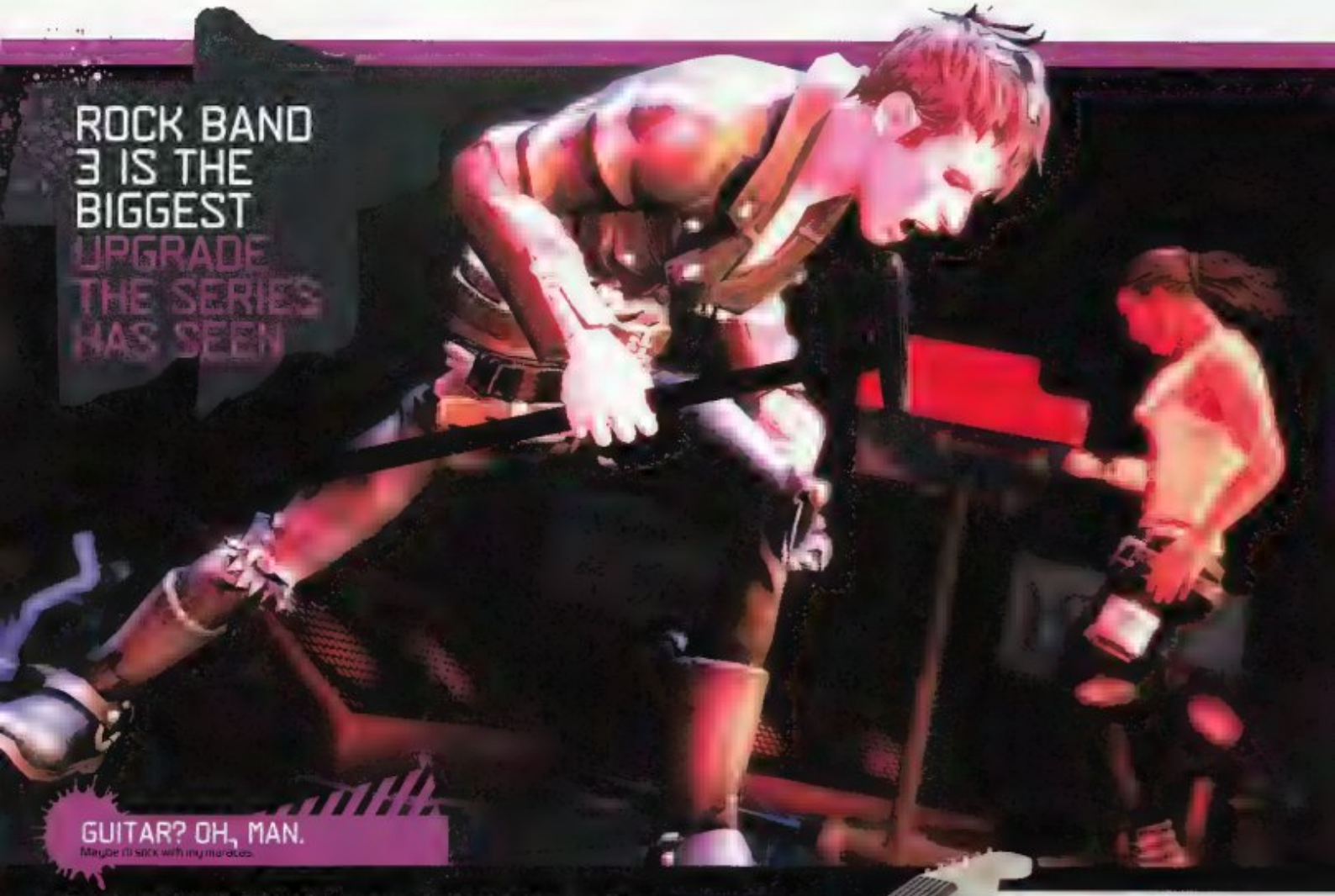
Drop-in and drop-out gameplay is a new and much-needed feature in Rock Band 3. Anyone can jump in mid-song, without pausing, even with their own gamertag by signing in through a new blade interface at the bottom of the screen.

▲ Warning: Looking directly into the rock lasers may cause irreversible eye damage.

PLAY LIKE A PRO

While drums in Rock Band have always been played much like they are in real life, it's only in this new iteration that you can play guitars and keyboards like musicians do in real life. That means string-by-string, fret-by-fret (in the case of the guitars), and key-by-key on the two-octave keyboard. The guitars also feature an innovative way of expressing chords that should be intuitive to real-life guitar players and accessible to those who've never picked up an axe. If playing the instruments in a real-world fashion is intimidating, worry not; a comprehensive training mode will teach you everything you need to know, and might even improve the skills of folks who already play.

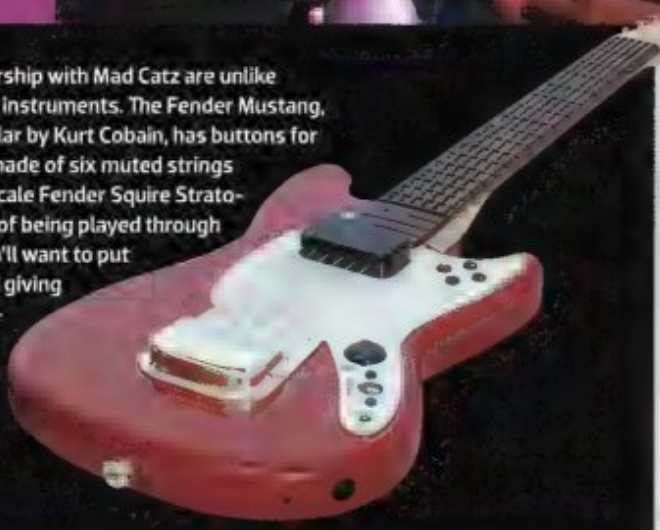
ROCK BAND 3 IS THE BIGGEST UPGRADE THE SERIES HAS SEEN



GUITAR? OH, MAN.

Maybe I'll stick with my maracas.

The new guitar controllers' built-in partnership with Mad Catz are unlike anything seen so far in the world of plastic instruments. The Fender Mustang, a small-scale guitar in real life made popular by Kurt Cobain, has buttons for each string at each fret, and a strum-bar made of six muted strings that can be plucked individually. The full-scale Fender Squire Stratocaster is an actual guitar, though, capable of being played through a regular amp. When playing the game you'll want to put the damper on, but the guitar is capable of giving you real-time feedback on where your fingers are on the fretboard, making playing the game with it a lot easier. Both guitars can also be used as MIDI controllers when plugged into a computer, if you're into more high-tech nerdery like that.



How to build a better keyboard? Slap a handle on it, thereby enabling all sorts of keytar shenanigans.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

The keyboard controller features a two-octave keyboard, with white and black keys that feel like the real thing. You can play it flat on a surface, or pick it up and rock out keytar style like it's the '80s all over again. In Pro mode it's a fully functioning keyboard, but it can be played in a simplified fashion too, with five keys set aside for the basic five color-coded notes.

"If you're a longtime *Rock Band* fanatic and have downloaded tons of your favorite tracks that didn't make the boxed edition, you'll still be able to play those songs in *Rock Band 3*..."

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ❤ Pro-style instruments
- ❤ Keyboards (finally!)
- ❤ Drop-in, drop-out gameplay

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Those new instruments are going to get pricey
- ✖ *RB3* songs not backward-compatible

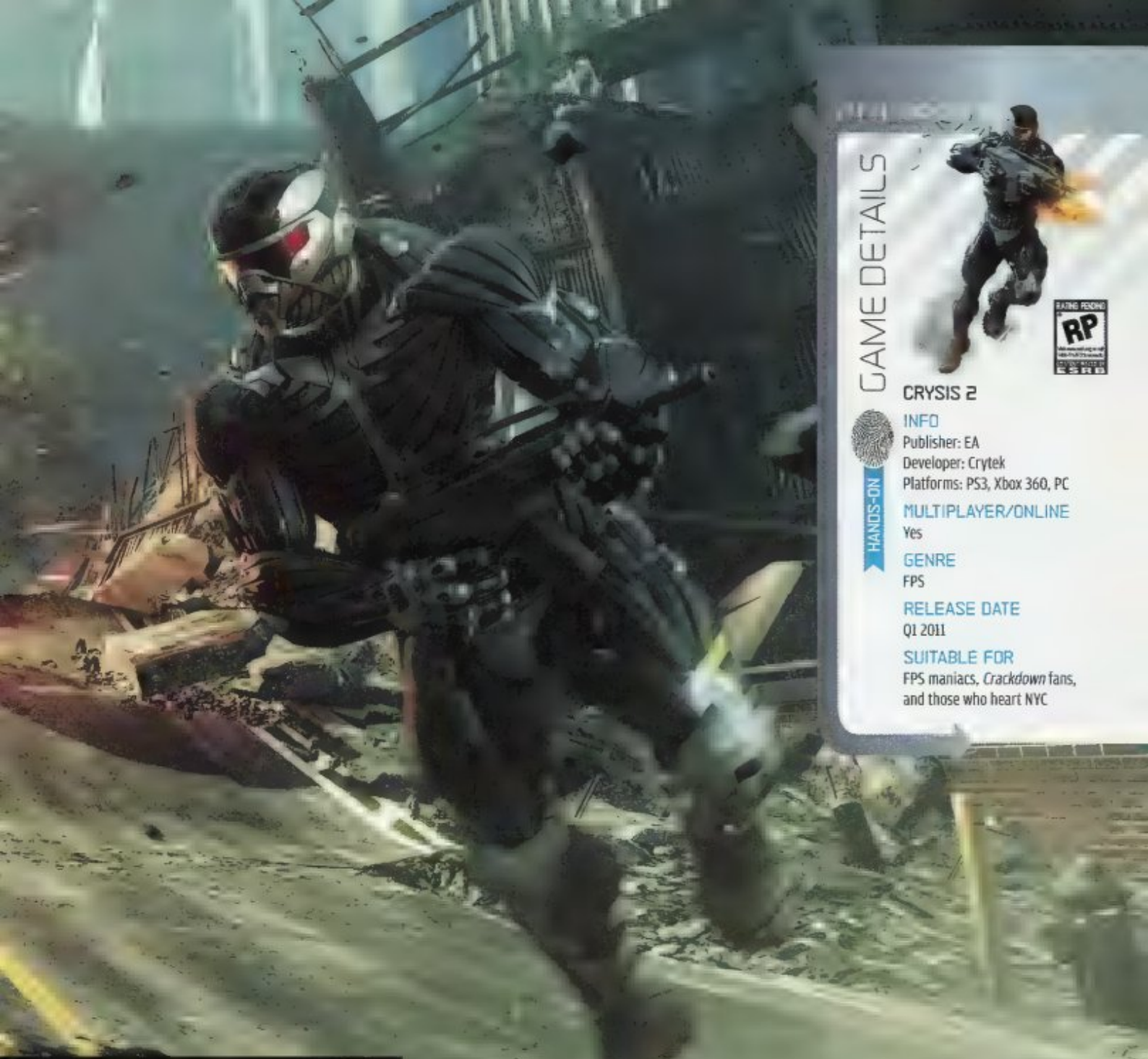
Bright lights, big city: Crytek brings its hardware-busting shooter to the urban jungle (and the third dimension)

There are few videogame developers that can boast the technical chops of German studio Crytek. And its latest showpiece, Crysis 2, only further drives the point home. Taking its trademarked brand of first-person combat into an urban environment, Crytek is going big: New York City, to be precise. "A city definitely offers a wide range of new experiences and offers many different areas that players can use as a playground," says Nathan Camarillo, the game's executive producer. "The increased verticality due to the new setting offers the players many opportunities to change height and approach the gameplay space in layers." Indeed, you will not be confined to the streets: Your supersoldier can jump between floors of buildings, climb onto buses or trucks, drop down into craters and fissures in the streets, and leap from one building to the next.

All of this freedom provides a much more layered strategic experience, and comes courtesy of a new-and-improved Nanosuit, allowing for almost Crackdown-style leaps and bounds. Instead of sticking with the four static modes, Crytek has enhanced the two most popular modes from the original games—stealth and armor—and complimented them with power, speed, and tactical information. By default, the Nanosuit makes your character more powerful, and gives him the ability to move quickly throughout the environment. But you can also manually activate armor for extra protection as well as stealth, which makes your character invisible—à la a Predator. "[We] combine the intensity of a linear FPS experience with the open sandbox gameplay and spaces Crysis is famous for," says Camarillo. "This is important because we do not tell you how to play. We give you the tools to play future warfare as the ultimate supersoldier. You need to save New York, and the Nanosuit allows you to be the weapon."

It's this tension that the developer is hoping

• Words: Evan Shamoon



GAME DETAILS

CRYSIS 2

HANDS-ON

INFO
Publisher: EA
Developer: Crytek
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Yes

GENRE
FPS

RELEASE DATE
Q1 2011

SUITABLE FOR
FPS maniacs, *Crackdown* fans, and those who heart NYC

will bring the game to life, and effectively differentiate it from the glut of other first-person shooters on the market. "The real key is the choreographed sandbox," says Camarillo. "We are seamlessly handing back and forth between scripted events that engage the player and move the story forward, and real-time systemic sandbox gameplay found in all Crysis games." Combining this with a more nuanced storyline, 3D support out of the box (on all platforms), and a robust multiplayer mode will make this one midlife Crysis you won't want to miss (the boat, comb-over, and sports car are entirely optional).

▲ STORYSHELLING

Another big focus for Crytek on Crysis 2 is story, as the studio is aiming to improve on the less-than-spectacular storytelling of the original. To do so, they brought in acclaimed science fiction author Richard Morgan to help craft a denser, more compelling narrative, that the team says sits in a cozy space between modern military shooters and near-future science fiction. Essentially, the game takes place in New York City circa 2023, which has since been evacuated due to an alien infestation. You take control of Alcatraz, a Delta Force operator who has stolen the Nanosuit 2 from Crynet Systems (which has launched a manhunt with his/your name on it). And good times ensue.

"WE WANT TO DRAW YOU INTO THE SCREEN"

ADDING A DIMENSION

Crysis 2 aims to be the first major multi-plaform game to take full advantage of true stereoscopic 3D. "We already started working on an internal S-3D project about three years ago, and the results just blew us away," he says. "We ourselves couldn't believe that a game in 3D could look that good, so we immediately decided to bring [it] to *Crysis 2* as well." Indeed, Crytek strives to raise the technological bar whenever possible. "The 3D experience represents the future of interactive entertainment."

But it's not quite the straightforward transition you might imagine. The studio's approach creates a concave 3D experience, which Camarillo believes is much more pleasing to the eye than others he's seen in development. "We have done extensive research on 3D implementations over the past couple of years to find the quality experience that is easiest on the player," he says. "We don't want you to experience 3D for 15 minutes, we want you to be able to play in 3D for hours without eye strain, fatigue, or motion sickness." The trick, he says, is to treat the television as the window into the 3D world of *Crysis 2*. "We want to draw you into the screen, rather than forcing things at you out of the screen."

CRYTEK ME A HUDSON RIVER

Crytek is unsurprisingly investing heavily in *Crysis 2*'s online options. "*Crysis 2* brings modern FPS multiplayer into the future warfare arena, with gameplay centered around giving each individual player the power of the Nanosuit," says Camarillo. The single-player progression allows you to unlock different software modules to upgrade your Nanosuit, and build custom loadouts of both weapons and modules, allowing you to customize configurations to your preferred gameplay style and role. "Every gameplay mode has more depth, and every match plays differently, depending on who is in it and what play styles they bring to the battle," says Camarillo. "The multiplayer in *Crysis 2* is really designed first and foremost around the Nanosuit, and the powers that you the player will have. We want the player to feel like a super soldier, like they themselves are as much of a weapon as the weapons they are carrying." The team is building its maps to take full advantage of the suits, and because of the New York City setting, expect verticality to come into play in a major way.

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Precursors *Crysis* and *Crysis: Warhead* are obvious must-plays on PC, but what about console owners? Try *Crackdown* or the newly released *Crackdown 2* for Xbox 360 for suit-enhanced action.

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ❤ The game looks amazing
- ❤ The 3D implimentation we saw was awesome

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Playing the game in 3D is not for the faint of stomach

UNLEASH TRUTH

"E3 2010 PEOPLE'S CHOICE" –GAMESPOT

"BEST OF E3" –GAMEPRO MAGAZINE

"BEST OF E3 AWARD WINNER" –THE ELECTRIC PLAYGROUND

TEEN T

Violence
Mild Blood

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

BETRAYED BY DARTH VADER FOR THE LAST TIME, STARKILLER HAS ESCAPED AND FACES A NEW JOURNEY TO FIND HIS TRUE IDENTITY.

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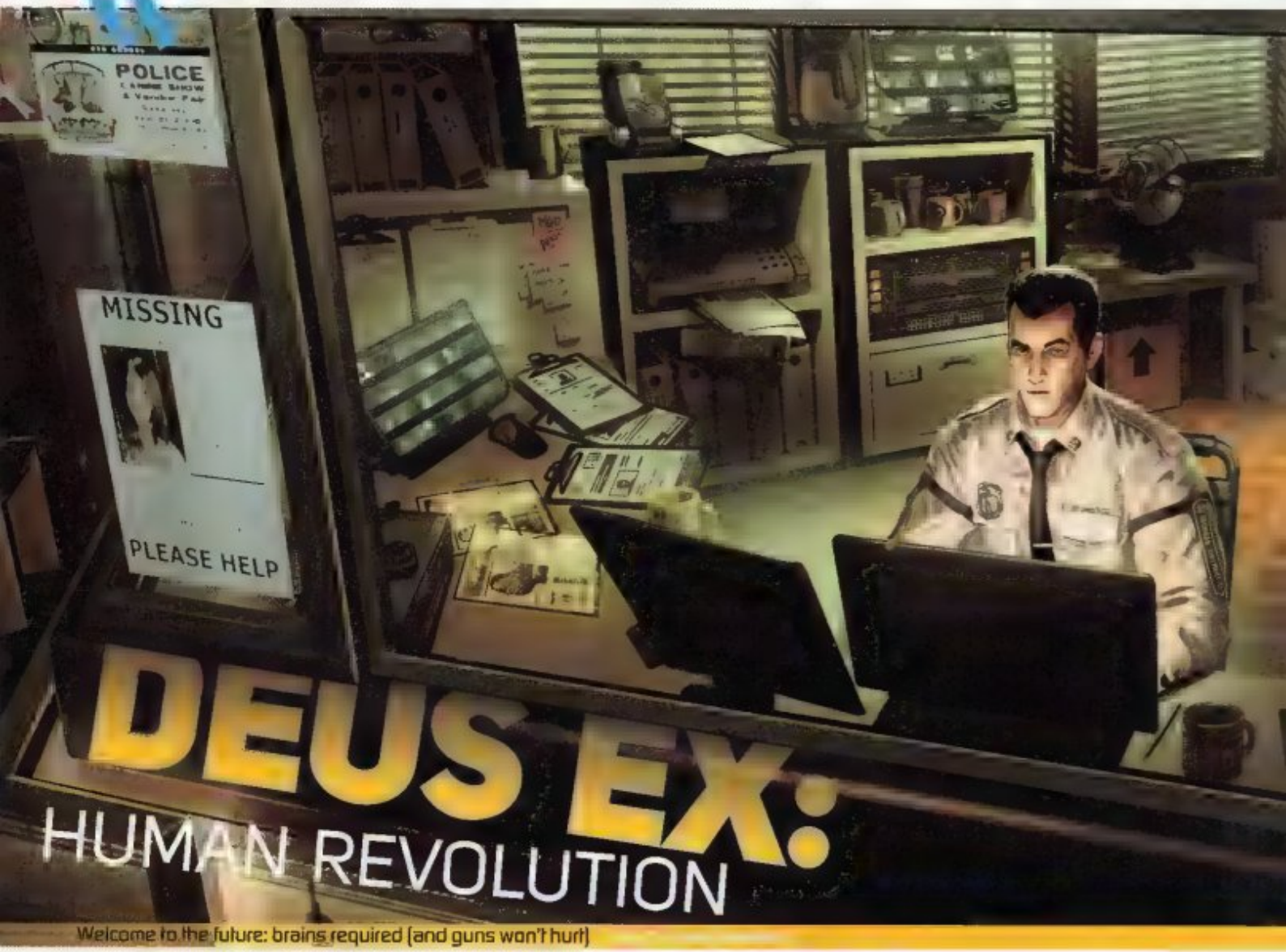

DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

Welcome to the future: brains required (and guns won't hurt)

For those with even a passing interest in the science fiction subgenre of cyberpunk—noted for its focus on high tech and low life, not to mention dark trench coats, rain-slicked streets, and blinking neon signs—the *Deus Ex* series has been something of a torchbearer, representing to games what *Neuromancer* and *Snow Crash* are to fiction, and *Blade Runner* and *The Matrix* are to film. And now, some seven years after the somewhat disappointing sequel, *Invisible War*, Eidos has assembled a new studio and a new team in Montreal to reinvigorate the franchise, giving it a radical technical overhaul in the process. It will do so without series creator Warren Spector, but what we've seen thus far is extremely promising.

Human Revolution takes place during the year 2027, a full 25 years before the original *Deus Ex*. Biomechanical augmentations represent the prevailing tech of the times (nanotech augmentation has not yet been developed), and as the game's main character, Adam Jensen, you play as a private security officer for a company that specializes in these augmentations. After an attack on the company that leaves Jensen severely injured, he is forced to undergo a biomech operation himself to survive; the primary mission, then, becomes figuring out who staged the attack and why, and begins with Jensen searching for a hacker on an island off the coast of Shanghai.

DEUS EX: HR IS WELL ON ITS WAY TO BECOMING ONE OF NEXT YEAR'S FINEST

Combat, Stealth, Technology, and Social are the four "gameplay pillars" the team is touting for *Human Revolution*, and these are demonstrated for us in impressive fashion right off the bat. Using an entirely new dialogue system, *Human Revolution* lets you choose one of three statements or approaches for Adam in any given situation; to get inside a club in Heng Sha, we fail to be convincing enough in our argument, but eventually manage to bribe the bouncer to let us through. This can also be accomplished, however, by speaking to nearby NPCs to figure out alternate entrances, by sneaking around the back to break in, or with a little bit of the ultra-violence. Essentially, you're able to use a combination of social skills, augmentated abilities, stealth, and brute force to progress; as has been a hallmark of the series, it will be possible to play through the entire game killing only the bosses and nobody else.

Arguably the most impressive surprise at this year's E3, *Human Revolution* appears well on its way to filling the series' rather formidable shoes. The painstaking attention to detail was apparent everywhere our demo took us; descending down the staircase into one of Shanghai's main thoroughfares, in particular, is

The developers assure us that only some of the game's security guards look like vampires.

To help bring the Human Revolution universe to life, Eidos created more than a hundred different, fictional in-game brands for the game. Their logos will be plastered everywhere, from the sides of buildings to vehicles to the butt of your gun (and, presumably, the foreheads of the dudes you smack with it). You'll visit five cities during the course of the game—including Detroit, Shanghai and Montreal—but you'll never escape all those ads.

PS3 XBOX 360 PC

GAME DETAILS

DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

INFO
Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: Eidos Montreal
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Yes

GENRE
FPS/Adventure

RELEASE DATE
2011

SUITABLE FOR
Conspiracy theorists, cyberpunks, ne'er do wells, and anarchists

a rather extraordinary experience unto itself: The marriage of glowing video advertisements, swirling clouds of dark smog, and a metropolis' worth of civilians going about their lives was truly something to behold. It's still early days, certainly, but unless something goes horribly awry, Human Revolution is well on its way to becoming one of next year's finest.

The most spectacular of Human Revolution's many tricks thus far sees our protagonist Adam Jensen standing atop a warehouse, looking down through a glass skylight at a huddled group of guards below. Using one of his biomech augmentations, Jensen crashes through the glass and into the ground, triggering a claymore augmentation implanted in his back that fires a steadily expanding circle of airborne mines into the various heads and necks that surround him. It's all very Matrix-inspired, but this does little to dampen its effectiveness.

Enemy squads will react to subtle player decisions, like altering strategy or changing weapons.

TRANS-HUMAN EXPRESS

The rapid pace of technological development in *Human Revolution*'s depiction of the future is reflected in the fashion and the architecture of the times, all of which is rendered in a decidedly sepia-heavy color palette. Characters supportive of the advances in human augmentation dress and decorate their homes in a style that reinterprets the late-medieval Italian Renaissance, while characters who oppose augmentation wear clothing that is what we might think of as being more distinctly "futuristic." It's one of the developer's many subtle touches; floor designs have been taken from real-world castles and cathedrals, generally found beneath the feet of wealthy homeowners who embrace the bio-mechanical revolution.

▲ MEDIA PROS! The left-handed Adam Jensen sniping in the Picus TV newsroom.

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Looking for a dark post-apocalyptic open-world game with multiple play styles and augmentations? Hunt down a copy of *Fallout 3* on Xbox 360, PS3, or PC.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Breathtaking sense of atmosphere
- ❤ Offers impressively varied approaches to every situation

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ It's still a year away!

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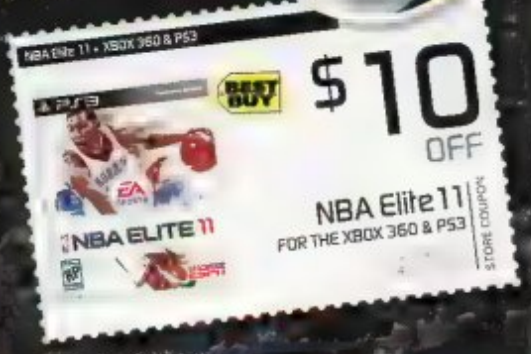

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01 LOST PLANET 2

Words: Jeremy, 654 – Foxpoint, WI

The bugs have gotten bigger, uglier, and nastier and it's up to you to use the new Vital Suits and your vast array of weapons to seize control of E.D.N. III. 10 years of terraforming has pushed back the cold and icy wasteland, revealing verdant forests and stark deserts. Fight gigantic Akrids across six of the interconnected episodes as a solo pirate or take down the behemoths with three of your snow pirate companions. You can also take the battle online and fight across the changing landscape in 16-player combat and find out where you rank.

02 CRACKDOWN 2

Words: Luis, 415 – Fort Gratiot, MI

Crackdown 2 is the sequel to the Xbox 360's early surprise hit, and this time it doesn't have the benefit of coming with a Halo 3 beta. Luckily, Crackdown 2 is full of the same thrills as its predecessor. Your Agent is tasked with cleaning up the city for The Agency, and a streak of RPG elements let you level up your character's abilities by shooting, fighting, driving, jumping and blowing up as much as possible. This time the night/day cycle is much more fleshed out, and particularly nasty creatures shamble through the streets when the sun goes down. But hey, that's your cue to run them all down and rake in the skill-boosting orbs. Long live The Agency!

SEE PAGE 84

03 H.A.W.X 2

Words: Jeremy, 654 – Foxpoint, WI

Return to the cockpit as one of the elite High Altitude Warfare Experiment pilots. In Tom Clancy's war-torn future, you won't rule the air by simple dogfights and bombings alone. Prepare for taking off and landing on land and on sea, throttling down for mid-air refueling, and utilizing the precision of the Unmanned Aerial Vehicles that are now at your disposal. Battle your way across the globe and through 21 critical missions as a lone maverick, or have three of your fellow dogs of war scramble their jets and join you in the scrum.

04 NBA ELITE 11

Words: Jeremy, 654 – Foxpoint, WI

The game has changed and it's time you let your opponents know whose house this is. Show off your skills as you use the revolutionary "Hands-On Control" scheme to dribble, drive, dunk, shoot, steal, and block your way up and down the hardwood. Experience the real-time physics that finally allows each player to move independently from one another as they help you get to the championship. If you don't want to do it alone, grab three of your teammates from the bench to dominate the court. However, to see who the Elite really are, you need to take the action online for some 5-on-5.

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SEE PAGE 68

05 SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS

Words: Kyle, 1485 – SW Omaha, NE

"With great power, comes great responsibility." When everyone's favorite webhead discovers the Tablet of Order and Chaos, he must travel across four parallel dimensions to restore order. In Shattered Dimensions you'll explore the worlds of the classic Amazing Spider-Man, Spider-Man 2099, Spider-Man Noir, and Ultimate Spider-Man. Experience stunning environments, new abilities, and epic showdowns that provide an experience unlike any other comic-based videogame. As a comic fan I can't wait to jump in and explore worlds never before seen in a Spider-Man game.

06 KINGDOM HEARTS: BIRTH BY SLEEP

Words: Kyle, 1485 – SW Omaha, NE

When Kingdom Hearts was first released in 2002, no one could have anticipated the success it would lead to. In Birth by Sleep, we experience the beginning. Set 10 years before the first Kingdom Hearts, you'll follow the journeys of Terra, Aqua, and Ventus as they battle through various Disney worlds. This series is so amazing, it's hard to put into words. I'm looking forward to picking up this installment of the story and battling through the worlds we grew up watching in movies.

07 TURTLE BEACH EARFORCE X41 HEADSET

Words: Jeremy, 654 – Foxpoint, WI

Immerse yourself in the world of videogames like never before with one of the most advanced wireless headsets for your Xbox 360. Free yourself from the confines of wires as you experience Dolby and 7.1 surround sound. Boost the bass to feel the burst of gunfire, surge of explosions, and roar of the engines, as you become a part of the action. The chat volume adjusts automatically as the game volume increases to help you pwn friends and opponents alike. Never listen to your games the same way again.

08 Wii MINI CONTROLLER PACK (ASSORTED)

Words: Pete, Minneapolis, MN

The Pro Pack Mini set from POWER A has the same functionality as the original Wii Remote and Nunchuk, but in a compact design – it's 35% smaller. It has a comfortable grip, larger "A," "1" and "2" buttons, backlit control buttons, and comes in black or purple. This is a really comfortable Wii controller with great performance—it just seems to disappear into your hand.

DJ HERO 2

The world of wannabe turntablism gets remix

William O'Neal

When games such as *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* first came out, all my gaming friends couldn't get enough of them. Sure, they were innovative, but I was never a big fan of Creedence Clearwater Revival, The Beatles, or most of the music that these games were all about. I grew up on hip hop, so for the most part, these games didn't speak to me. Enter *DJ Hero*. When it first came out it was mostly met with favorable reviews. That said, sales weren't terribly brisk—at first. Here we are a year later and sales have exceeded one million copies...which leads us to *DJ Hero 2*. The sequel aims to pick up where its predecessor left off by adding new multiplayer modes, new artists, and, most importantly, new music.

The folks over at FreeStyleGames came by our offices to give us some hands-on time, and we were impressed with many of its improvements. The devs want *DJ Hero 2* to feel like playing in a nightclub, and many of the game's new modes succeed in this regard. One of the most exciting features is the ability to have vocalists participate, scoring them on pitch and range detection. Vocalists are even cooler in the context of Party Play, which lets players jump in and out in the middle of gameplay without stopping the fun.

While multiplayer is a huge part of *DJ Hero 2*, the fact remains that a lot of game time will be spent in solitude. Of course, DJs are notorious for spending countless hours alone making beats and mixtapes. To that end, Empire Mode starts you out as a newbie DJ whose sole goal is to head up what the game's makers call a "major entertainment empire." Of course, you'll only get there if you can prove yourself as a DJ.

Music games live and die by the artists that they sign, and *DJ Hero 2* has added some great acts to its lineup, including Lady Gaga, Deadmau5, Kanye West, Chemical Brothers, Dr. Dre, DJ Shadow, David Guetta, DJ Qbert, and Tiësto. The gameplay style is similar to the original *DJ Hero*'s, with some interesting additions. The game now boasts Freestyle scratching, cross-fading, and sampling that you'll get to perform at set points in the game. Another mode is DJ Battle, which rocks custom-designed mixes replete with call-and-response gameplay. Other modes include Star Battle, Accumulator, Checkpoint, and Streak.

While we loved the original *DJ Hero*, we're even more excited for *DJ Hero 2*.

THE DEVS WANT *DJ HERO 2* TO FEEL LIKE PLAYING A NIGHTCLUB

DEADMAUS
Not only did Deadmau5 rock Activision's E3 party, but he also plays a big part in DJ Hero 2.

GAME DETAILS

DJ HERO 2

INFO
Publisher: Activision
Developer: FreeStyleGames
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to two DJs and one vocalist

GENRE
Music

RELEASE DATE
October 19, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Those who like music games that aren't just about wailing guitars

HANDS-ON

PARTY PLAY

Party Play first showed up in Guitar Hero 5 and has received a significant upgrade for DJ Hero 2. Games like this are made for party situations, with players wanting to jump in and out of games without interrupting the flow. Party Play does just that, allowing DJs and vocalists to jump in mid-game, where they can spin "on the fly," grab the microphone, or even switch difficulty levels without interrupting the game.

TWO TURNTABLES... YEAH, YEAH, AND A MICROPHONE

One of the great things about *DJ Hero 2* is that more people can get in on the action. At a recent *DJ Hero 2* event that Activision held in San Francisco, we got to compete against (and subsequently get destroyed by) DJ Qbert while a vocalist rapped alongside. DJ Hero 2 is designed with parties in mind, and having more players in on the action is a definite improvement.

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Two words: *DJ Hero*. The original game (with turntable controller) has been discounted substantially since it was first released.

WHAT'S GREAT:

- With two turntables and a microphone, more players can get in on the fun
- Party Play makes it easy to jump in and out without messing up the game's flow
- More mashups, more artists, more fun

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- While we love many of the game's improvements, it still feels a lot like the original

GAMEPLAY

SUPERSTAR DJS

With such big-name artists as Lady Gaga, Kanye West, Chemical Brothers, Dr. Dre, DJ Shadow, and DJ Qbert, *DJ Hero 2* boasts some serious talent. And with more than 80 mashups, *DJ Hero 2* goes a long way toward emulating the kind of battles that epitomize DJ culture. Best of all, using the new Hero Feed—just like Deadmau5 and his many rivalries—would-be DJs can challenge others, brag to their friends about their results, and even track their friends' relative accomplishments.

You may be superhuman but you still need to rack up combos in order to unleash your powers on enemy forces.

PS3 PC

GAME DETAILS

DC UNIVERSE ONLINE

INFO
Publisher: SOE
Developer: SOE
Platforms: PS3, PC

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Online Only

GENRE
MMO

RELEASE DATE
November 2, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Die-hard comic book fans with an inclination for MMOs

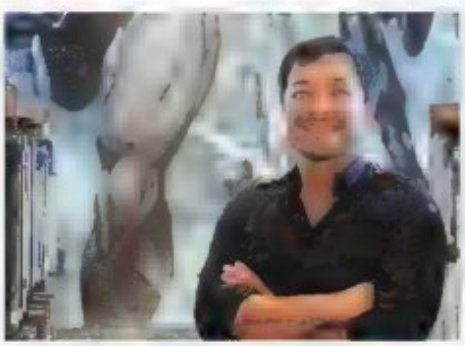
DC UNIVERSE ONLINE

The struggle of good vs. evil draws near, which side will you choose? • Words: Heather Barron

As is typical with comic book lore, DCUO takes place in the not-too-distant future, where Braniac is set to return and demolish every ounce of life. Not being a huge fan of oblivion, Lex Luthor travels back in time and warns the Justice League about Earth's imminent destruction. But can he be trusted? Choosing to disregard Lex's warning may spell doom for all of mankind, and no budding superhero wants that resting on their shoulders.

Similar to MMOs like WoW and Aion, you'll start out by choosing a faction, Superhero or Villian. Your race will be limited to "human," so there isn't much wiggle room on that front. Thankfully there will be plenty of ways to customize your character's unique look. In addition, you'll get to pick a set of powers and a source. These choices can mirror established heroes such as Green Lantern or be totally original. You'll also be assigned a mentor depending on your expertise. For example, if technology is your main claim to fame you'll be sent to learn from icons like Batman or Joker. (My favorite gadget as a tech nerd superhero? A robot that follows you around everywhere.) Then you'll need to earn some street cred to get noticed by the "big gun" superheroes of the DC Universe and fight alongside the likes of Superman.

Kudos aside, we would have liked to be able to run around as Harley Quinn, but DCUO is about creating a legacy, not riding on coattails. Luckily, you'll have the chance to play as some of DC's more famous (and infamous) characters. Separate from the main story, you'll be able to duke it out against other players in an arena as your favorite hero or villain. Its MMO basics certainly look solid. With action up to its ears and an all-star cast to boot, DC Universe Online could very well prove to be the rare online game worth its subscription fee.



▲ Superstar comic book artist Jim Lee is DCUO's executive director, so you can count on the game being a fan favorite.

WHAT'S GREAT
- An illustrious cast of voice actors: Mark Hamill, Kevin Conroy, Adam Baldwin, Gina Torres, and James Marsters, to name a few
- The ability to pick your own unique set of superpowers

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT
- Could fall under the shadow of games like *City of Heroes* and *Champions Online*
- Monthly subscription is slated to cost $14.99

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

EPISODE I

After years of 3D *Sonic* titles, Sega returns to its platforming roots with a new downloadable game set to drop in the near future

• Words: Heather Barron

Sega hopes to win back long-lost fans with *Sonic the Hedgehog 4: Episode I*. The game looks solid, but skeptics will wonder if the most famous hedgehog in the world has what it takes to restore some dignity to his once-hallowed franchise.

Since Episode I's E3 debut, Sega has heeded the feedback of die-hard enthusiasts. The most noticeable difference is the reduction in time it takes for Sonic to reach maximum velocity. Additionally, the game now has more "weight," thanks to adjustments to the gravity system.

Over the years Sega has introduced a wide variety of playable characters, Tails and Knuckles being the most popular. For some reason, Sonic is the only playable character in Episode I. There's been no mention of unlockable characters, but here's hoping.

Criticisms aside, our sense of nostalgia set in the moment we took the first zone out for a spin. The background foliage dances as you pump A to get some momentum going. When you slam into the springs vaulting to higher ground you'll notice a reticule on nearby enemies; tap B to send Sonic at them for a little retribution. Enemies are just as colorful and pea-brained as ever.

Special stages, a highlight of the classic Sonic titles, are back with a vengeance. There are seven Chaos Emeralds to be had, and you only need a small amount of rings at the end of a stage in order to have a go at getting one. In the spirit of the original *Sonic the Hedgehog*, a large ring appears near the goal post and that's your cue to get in on the action. The bonus level I played is a psychedelic callback to the first *Sonic*. The timer ticks away as you rotate a maze to get Sonic to the Chaos Emerald. Not only are you racing against the clock, there are micro challenges that must be overcome in order to reach the elusive Emerald. For example, at one point a gate closes off Sonic's only means of continuing through the rest of the maze. In order to move through to the next part he has to collect a certain amount of rings. The bonus level is where the game's revamped visuals truly shine, with crystalline walls and pulsating background imagery that's as trippy as Sonic games tend to get. Collecting all of the Chaos Emeralds unlocks an alternative cliffhanger ending, so put your game face on in bonus levels if you want the plot to thicken. The alternative ending ties into the upcoming Episode II, in case you aren't already convinced you need to go the extra mile.

SEGA'S HEEDED THE FEEDBACK OF THE MOST DIE-HARD *SONIC* FANS

GAMEPLAY

Sonic 4 is set to acquaint newer gamers with Sonic's 2D platforming prowess, as not everyone had the luxury of growing up during the Sega console generation.

If you've ever played *Sonic* then you know exactly what this lamp post does.

GREEN HILLS, EVOLVED

This is Splash Hill Zone, displaying all the first-zone requisites: checkered backdrops, distant lakes, twisting loops, and a general lack of anything to slow you down. Guess those waterfalls add the "splash."

SECOND WIND

Sega is trying hard to get back its mojo with *Sonic 4*, but will it be able to breathe life back into a dying hedgehog? From the looks of it, the developers are on the right track.

Eggman Returns
Sonic's old nemesis is back once again. What, were you expecting Dr. Wily?

PS3 XBOX360 Wii

GAME DETAILS

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 4: EPISODE 1

INFO
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Dimps, Sonic Team
Platforms: PS3/PSN, Xbox 360/ XBLA, Wii, iPhone/iPad Touch

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Single-player only

GENRE
Platformer

RELEASE DATE
October 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Any fan of that classic blue hair, red sneakers look

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Classic 2D gameplay and an iconic character? Play *Super Mario Bros. Wii* (on the Wii, of course) for a nostalgic take on Sonic's old rival in the gaming wars.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Sonic is returning to his platformer glory years
- ❤ Blazing speeds, trippy visuals

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Set to be an episodic experience instead of one large installment
- ✖ The only playable character is Sonic

SPLATTERHOUSE

Rick Taylor is bulkier, angrier, and bloodier than ever - Words: Heath [illegible]

Arcade purists can feel free to clam up right now. While this remake of the 1988 arcade classic *Splatterhouse* not only does its namesake right, it's more than just an upgrade to the 16-bit beat 'em up that we came of age with. Now all sorts of colorful executions known as "Splatter Kills" are at your disposal, and you better believe they are gruesome. I'll spare you the gory details but let's just say these moves give new meaning to the word spineless. Needless to say, *Splatterhouse* pushes its M rating to the limit.

As a fan of blood and guts, I surprisingly found myself cringing from time to time. While we can't really go into some of the more horrific details, let's just say that you'd better be ready to dole out your worst.

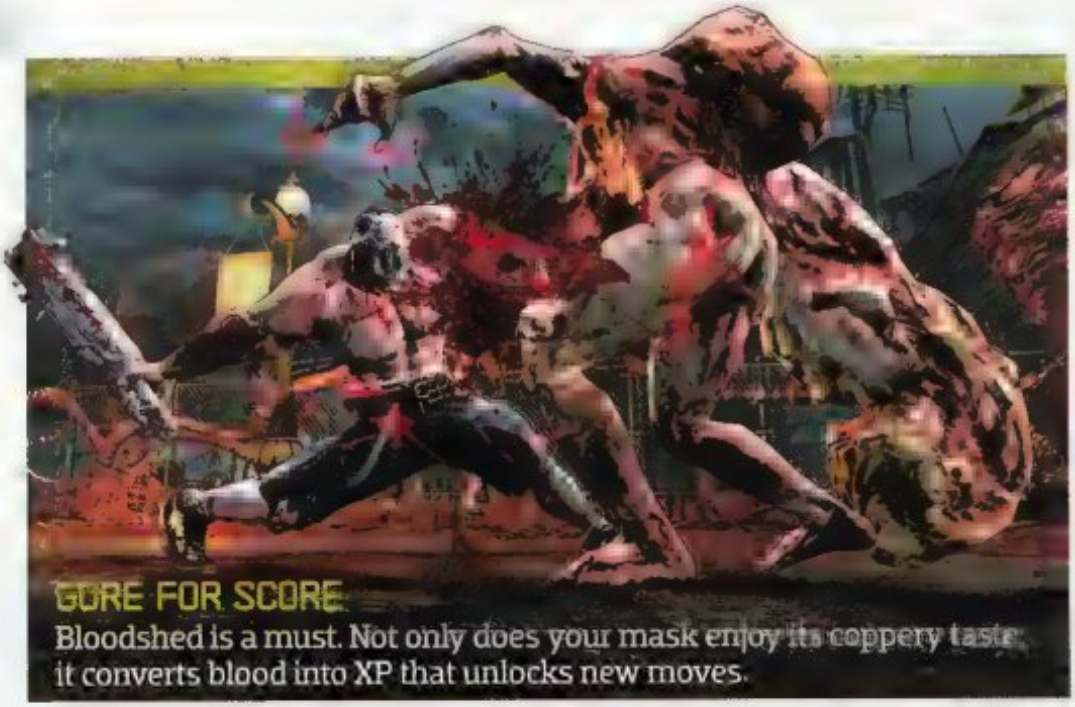
Playing as Rick Stevens, you'll notice that Rick's body isn't the only thing that's been beefed up since the original; his arsenal now includes a vast assortment of improvised weapons. Lose an arm in battle? Use it to beat down enemies. Are all of your limbs still intact? Rip off an enemy's head and give that a go instead. If all else fails, Rick's iconic 2x4 wooden board is always there to cave in some faces.

Music plays a huge role in *Splatterhouse* and to this end the game boasts a heavy metal soundtrack that rivals Brütal Legend's. Pulse-pounding tunes match music to the mayhem, so don't be surprised if you catch yourself head-banging while you're slicing and dicing.

The core story doesn't deviate much from that of the original. Rick likes Jennifer. Jennifer disappears. Rick gets brutalized. A mask brings Rick back to life. Blood and guts ensue.

Of course, sentient masks aren't exactly a dime a dozen, especially one that drinks blood. Since Rick doesn't have many friends at good ole' West Mansion, the mask is his closest companion and throughout the game the two share hilarious commentary that adds extra flavor to the experience. If you come to the conclusion that the "Terror Mask" isn't good enough to be your only pal, reanimate some corpses to fight by your side.

A game where you are constantly mowing through hordes of monsters can get old fast, no matter how stylish the executions, which is why I welcome the platforming aspects. Rick may be the size of two professional football players combined, but he can jump with the grace of a ballerina. If the non-stop action isn't incentive enough to check this game out, after tracking down Jennifer and laying the smackdown on Dr. West, you'll be the proud new owner of all three original *Splatterhouse* titles.



GORE FOR SCORE

Bloodshed is a must. Not only does your mask enjoy its coppery taste it converts blood into XP that unlocks new moves.

▲ Always take off your shoes before entering the... oh, never mind.

▲ In 1993 id Software coined the term "gibs." In 2010 *Splatterhouse* is taking that concept and running with it, very hard and very far.

GAMEPLAY \\

Health bars are a thing of the past in *Splatterhouse*. Rick's level of mutilation is indicator enough of when you've had a bit too much brutality thrown your way.

FEED THAT MASK!

The Mask: while evil is actually your friend

The Mask that gives Rick his strength and power is somewhat blood-thirsty. Because of the Mask's voracious apetite for blood, it rewards Rick when he performs...um...more grizzly acts. This rather symbiotic relationship results in some scenes that are downright horrific. The more blood, the happier the Mask; the happier the Mask, the more powerful Rick becomes.

PS3 XBOX 360

GAME DETAILS

SPLATTERHOUSE

HANDS-ON

INFO
Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: Namco Bandai
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Single-player only

GENRE
Survival horror

RELEASE DATE
November 23, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Gamers with a thirst for blood and/or disgruntled hockey fans

BEST BUY

Preorder Exclusive

Downloadable content code that [illegible] Splatterhouse [illegible] (Sega Genesis)

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Up for some of that old ultraviolence, but don't have a PS3 or Xbox 360? Slice into MadWorld, an over-the-top bloodfest available exclusively for the Wii.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- A heavy metal soundtrack like none other
- The shift in camera views give the game a fresh feeling

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Some of the violence is a bit over-the-top
- Measuring up to the fan's high expectations will be a formidable challenge

Do a barrel roll! Um, okay, that didn't help. Uh, do another barrel roll!

ENSLAVED: ODYSSEY TO THE WEST

Monkey see, Monkey do, Monkey kill. • Words: Tom Price

Developer Ninja Theory only has one other game under its belt, the 2007 PS3 exclusive Heavenly Sword. While the story and inspiration for its new game Enslaved: Odyssey to the West doesn't draw from any of the same sources, there are some commonalities between the titles that should be appealing to gamers. Namely, the exceptionally vivid facial animations of the characters and a focus on some really exciting melee combat.

Set 150 years in the future after an apocalyptic world war, Enslaved follows two captives of a slave ship who escape the crashing dreadnought only to find themselves surrounded by killer robots in an abandoned and overgrown New York City. You control Monkey, a highly skilled (especially when it comes to climbing and jumping) and brutally tough warrior of mysterious origins. Trip is a clever young woman, master of all things technological. That's how she outfitted Monkey with a headband that delivers immense pain if he doesn't do as she says. She makes him a deal: Get her back to her home 300 miles away and she'll take off the band. He better not try anything funny either; if her heart stops beating, the headband will kill him.

IF HER HEART STOPS, THE HEADBAND WILL KILL HIM

Their captor/slave relationship changes over time, as Monkey plows through armies of robot drones of all sizes and capabilities with his energy staff and armored fists, and Trip hacks doors and provides other pertinent info. Monkey's ability to climb across just about any mound of ruins and wreckage brings Tomb Raider to mind, and God of War seems like another inspiration with its cinematic cameras. But on the whole, Enslaved has a very original look and feel and should stand on its own not just for its action, but also its superb storytelling.

HAMMER OF THE MONKEY GOD

The combat system employed by Monkey follows a pretty basic fighting control scheme. One button is for punch, another slams your energy staff into an enemy. You'll have to block, of course, with the right trigger, but you can do special takedowns too, and a charged stun attack is often necessary for shielded bots. Your staff also doubles as a ranged weapon, shooting stun grenades and the regular old kill-you kind.

Here Piggy!
Piggy is one of the few other human characters you'll encounter and he barely qualifies.

PS3 XBOX 360

GAME DETAILS

ENSLAVED: ODYSSEY TO THE WEST

HANDS-ON

INFO
Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: Ninja Theory
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Single-player only

GENRE
Action-adventure

RELEASE DATE
October 5, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Lovers of acrobatic butt-kicking

BEST BUY

Preorder Bonus
Sexy Robot Trip Downloadable Content Pack

GAMEPLAY

▲ CYBERLAB:
Trip might have done you a favor enslaving you with that headband. It explains why you can see a heads-up display as you run around.

▲ CLOUD SURFING
Monkey has some other tricks, like this hoverboard device called "cloud" that lets him cruise over water or escape huge bosses.

THE TALENT POOL

Characters seem to have an eerie level of realism to their faces, and you feel more like you're watching real actors rather than digital puppets. For both games you can thank the same guy: Andy Serkis, aka the guy who played Gollum. He not only acts but directs the scenes. He's got great material to work with, too: Alex Garland, who wrote 28 Days Later, The Beach, and a bunch of other amazing stuff penned the story.

SHE'S A TRIP
Trip can't take down a murderous battle bot, but she's hardly useless. She can stun them with an EMP, buying you some time.

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

For non-stop fighting and large-scale cinematic encounters, God of War III for PS3 will definitely hold you over until Enslaved debuts this October.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- Top-notch writing and acting drive a great story
- Uniquely beautiful post-apocalyptic world

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Climbing and jumping may be a bit too idiot-proof
- Framerates and textures still look a little rough; could be polished more by final release

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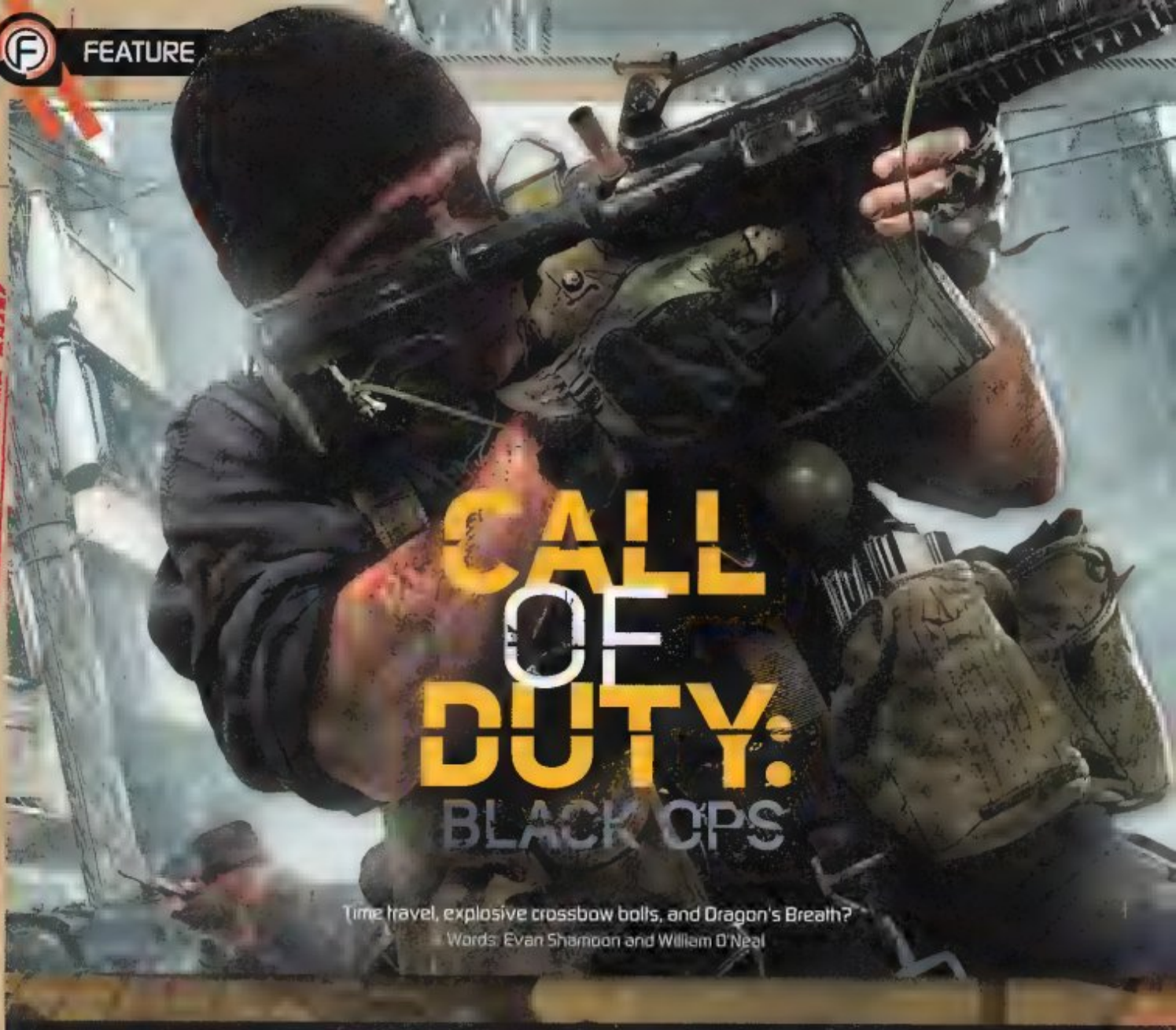
CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS
We declassify the latest in the Call of Duty franchise. Can you say "epic multiplayer?" PG. 46



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

Time travel, explosive crossbow bolts, and Dragon's Breath?

Words: Evan Shamoon and William O'Neal

Call of Duty is one of the few military-themed shooter franchises that has transcended its own subgenre. To millions, it has become the new de facto FPS, as evidenced by the thousands of matches happening online every hour. And so it would seem an odd time for the toppling of Activision's Infinity Ward studio, the creators of the franchise and most of its iterations, including the phenomenally successful *Modern Warfare 2*. But topple it has, with new management established at Infinity Ward and fresh attention brought to the latest Call of Duty title, Black Ops.

Developer Treyarch, responsible for the critically well-received *World at War*, is at the helm of *Black Ops*, and even at this unfinished stage the results are looking suitably larger-than-life. "One thing we learned is that the Call of Duty player wants to experience a fantastic, cinematically intense story," says Josh Olin, community manager at Treyarch. "For *Black Ops*, we're pulling out all the stops on the single-player campaign front." We were shown two missions, with the first entitled WMD and set in the Ural Mountains, where we're tasked with destroying a weapons-manufacturing facility. Armed with a crossbow and trudging through deep snow, we at one point watch as our character rappels off the side of a mountain and kicks through the window of the weapons facility. The action is drenched in the sort of frenetic, effects-laden chaos for which the series is now known.

As has generally been the case with Call of Duty titles, *Black Ops*' gameplay is very "driven," built around setpieces and structured around relatively defined lines. "We are telling a specific story, and taking the player on a ride," says Olin, who points out that the game is providing different gameplay mechanics to get you there. "If you want to take a particular portion of a mission stealthily, so be it. Or if you like to just light the place up and run-and-gun it, that's fine too."

The game travels between different real-life conflicts and different eras, including Vietnam, but keeps its attention laser-focused on moving the action along. When asked where the game fits on Hollywood's spectrum of war films, which range from patriotic to subversive, Olin says, "The entertaining war game. Our intention is not to make any sort of political statement with Call of Duty. We simply aim to entertain our fans, and provide an intense first-person shooter experience that will keep them coming back for more."

In CoD: Black Ops there will be times when stealth is key.

Speaking of boomsticks...while hiking through the densely packed snow of WMD, we were offered a look at a special crossbow that gives you the ability to stealthily fire an explosive-tipped bolt at a target with pinpoint accuracy. After rappelling down a sheer cliffside (using the controller triggers to alternately hold and release the rope), the soldiers break through the windows...and the shooting begins.

WANT MULTIPLAYER?
CoD: Black Ops has you covered

MULTIPLAYER GALORE!

Treyarch and Activision were noticibly mum about CoD: Black Ops' multiplayer options, which is why we jumped at the chance to head down to Santa Monica for a day that was all about getting our hands dirty in some hardcore Black Ops action.

Not only will CoD: Black Ops boast the requisite multiplayer modes that we've come to expect from the franchise—Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, and Domination—but the game contains many subtleties that greatly enhance the multiplayer experience.

CoD: Black Ops has in-game currency that you earn by playing the game, achieving milestones within the action, and by completing certain missions. You can also get currency by taking on mercenary missions. The cool thing about the currency is that you can use it to customize your character down to the finest detail. Aside from facepaint, you can customize your weapons' reticules and even stamp your weapons with your clan's tag.

Since currency is an important part of CoD: Black Ops, we especially liked that you can make in-game wagers with the folks you're playing against. It's one thing to kill a mark and take their weapon; it's another thing to kill a mark, take their weapon, and then take their money.

01 JUGGALOS?
Don't worry, this isn't another Gathering of the Juggalos. Use facepaint to make your character stick out.

02 BOOMSTICK!
The weapons in *CoD: Black Ops* are all customizable, with unique reticules and even clan tags.

MULTIPLAYER

Treyarch is extremely proud of *CoD: Black Ops*' extensive multiplayer modes. The CoD community was vital to how Treyarch approached it. "[Particularly because] our community is very vocal about what they like and don't like," says Olin.

SLAUGHTERHOUSE GOOD

The Slaughterhouse level starts in a helicopter. The action then continues through dilapidated buildings. The Dragon's Breath is a specially packed shotgun round that not only shoots out buckshot, but spews fire at the enemies, lighting them ablaze.

STORY SHOOTING

Treyarch is saying that the story will play a huge part in *Black Ops*. "We want to craft a great narrative with strong character development," Olin explains. "It's a major focus for the team this time around. How exactly we're telling that story is a bit of a spoiler, but let's just say that we're looking to change things up from our previous games." You will experience the narrative through the eyes of two high-ranking soldiers, who will be giving orders on the battlefield and commandeering vehicles when they see the need arise.

LAUNCH, SUMMIT, RADIATION

While visiting Treyarch, we spent the day playing the various multiplayer modes on three awesome maps: Launch, Summit, and Radiation. The maps all have different feels to them, while also providing some awesome chokepoints where the action gets pretty intense. Also, because the various multiplayer modes are so different, our experience with each of the maps varied greatly depending on the type of game we were playing.

LAUNCH

A relatively large map with a lot of open spaces, Launch takes place, obviously, on a launchpad. At a certain point during gameplay the rocket launches, and if anyone is near the blast radius of the rocket, they're toast (figuratively).

SUMMIT

Taking place in an alpine location, Summit felt a little smaller than the other maps. Because of this, the fighting was always pretty intense. Additionally, due to its scaled-down size, it's a good map for smaller groups.

RADIATION

Watch out for those blast doors. If you get caught down there... well, you can guess how that's gonna go. Of the three maps that we played, Radiation offered up the best mix of open spaces and choke points. Also, Capture the Flag seemed to work really well with the way this map was designed.

Battling it out in Summit can be tough. Because it's winter, and the snow is falling, choosing the right camo could be the difference between victory and defeat.

CAMO

Creating your character is not only crucial in CoD: Black Ops, it's actually fun.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CAMO COULD BE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VICTORY AND DEFEAT.

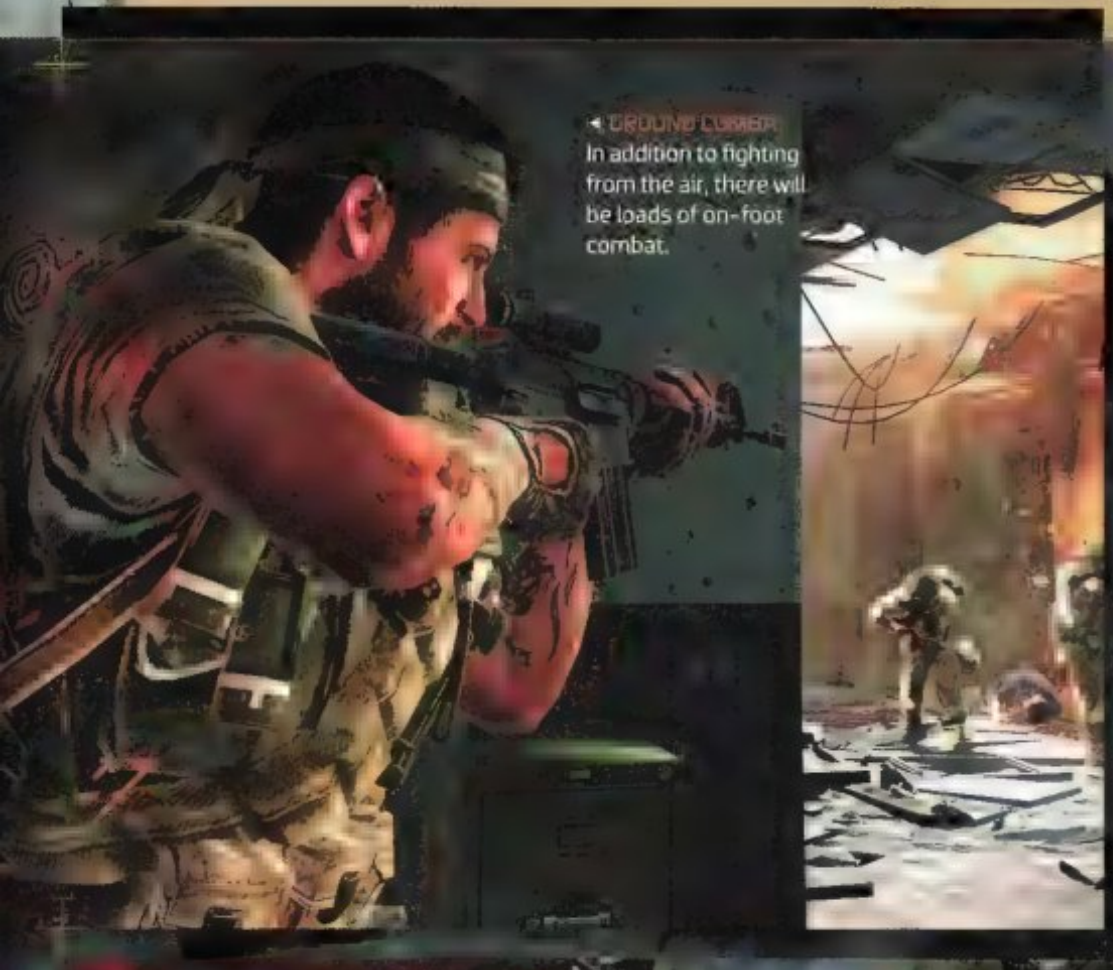
WEAPONS

While many of the weapons are super-high-tech, Treyarch assures us that they're historically accurate.

KIT

Before going into battle you're gonna want to make sure you're fully outfitted.

NAME



◂ GROUND GAMER
In addition to fighting from the air, there will be loads of on-foot combat.

MI-17 OR THE HOPPER

One new feature in *Black Ops* is your ability to take full control over a Russian Hind helicopter. "I want you to know that it's not a rail sequence—you're actually flying that chopper, and could do a 180° turn and fly back the other way if you wanted to," says Olin. "Now, keep in mind that we're not making a flight simulator, so the controls are very intuitive and will just feel natural to anybody who plays *Call of Duty*."

GOT SUPPORT? // VEHICLES WILL PROVIDE SUPPORT

Ruh roh! If you see one of these coming your way, you know you're in trouble.

Hueys, replete with miniguns, can help their buddies in tough situations.

Spy planes will help ground troops keep tabs on their enemies.

GAME DETAILS

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

HANDS-ON

INFO
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Treyarch, n-Space (DS)
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii, PC, DS

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Solo/team modes for up to 18 players online or four players in split-screen (consoles); Six players online and two-player co-op (DS)

GENRE
First-person shooter

RELEASE DATE
November 9, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Folks who like shooting stuff

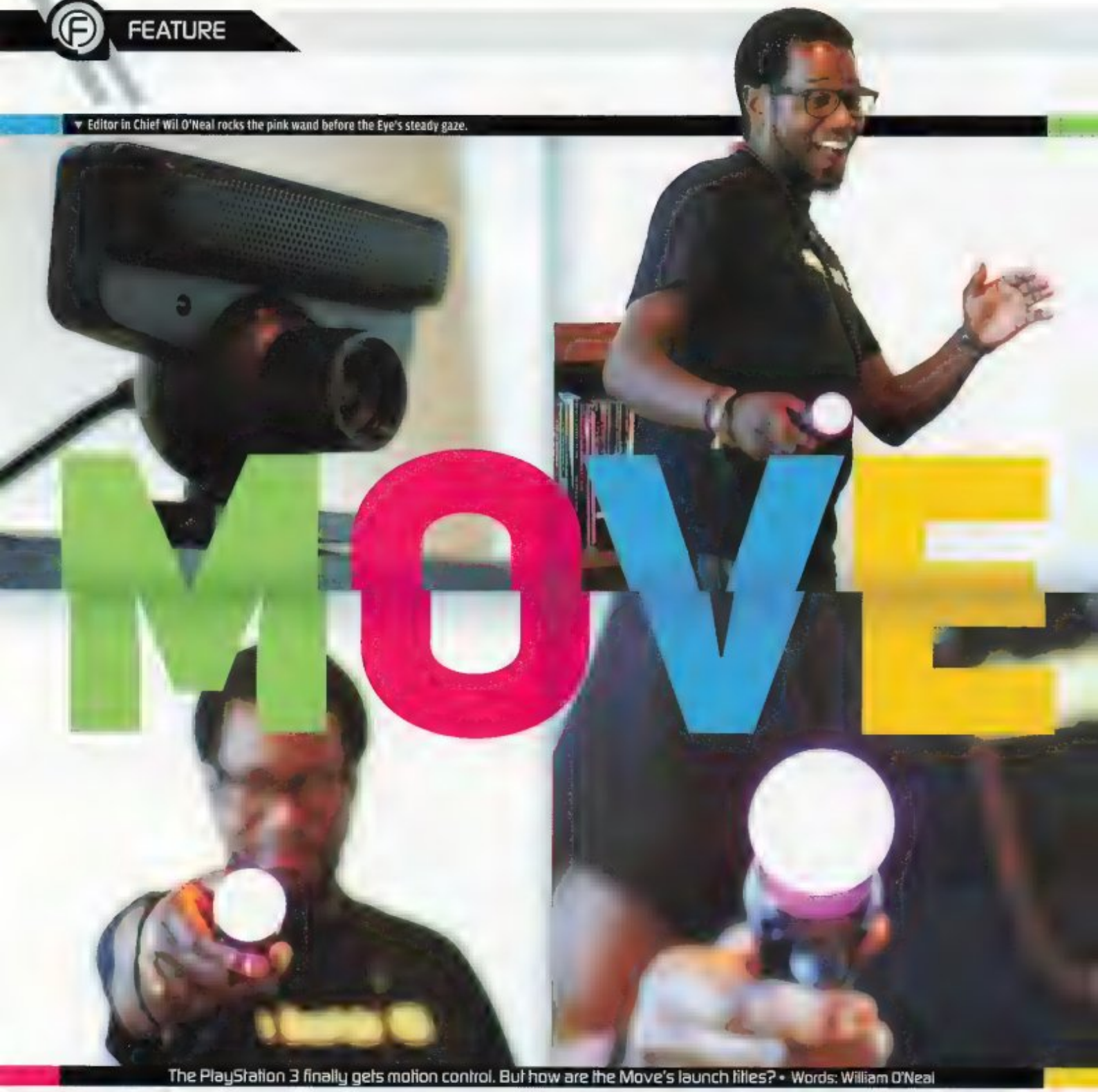
NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

If you're new to the *CoD* series, you've got lots of catching up to do. At the very least, do yourself a favor and check out last year's *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2*.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Treyarch knows how to make a great game
- ❤ An awesome arsenal of weapons
- ❤ The varied gameplay will have something for everyone

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Newbies will have a hard time being competitive at first.

▼ Editor in Chief Wil O'Neal rocks the pink wand before the Eye's steady gaze.



MOVE

The PlayStation 3 finally gets motion control. But how are the Move's launch titles? • Words: William O'Neal

Much has been said about Sony's foray into the world of motion control. If there was ever any doubt about the legitimacy of motion control in games, Nintendo put it to rest with the Wii. The Wii's super-low price point helped a lot of people get on board, and for a while "waggle" was everywhere we looked. Since Wii's launch, Sony and Microsoft have had plenty of time to look at what Nintendo did well and what it did poorly, and despite the Wii's massive sale numbers, many have postulated that it's lost some of its initial luster. Even if that's true, motion control in gaming seems like it's here to stay, and we got a chance to take a look at a bunch of the PlayStation Move games that are set to ship right around the time you read this article.

Compared to Microsoft's Kinect device, Sony's Move Controller has a certain advantage with hardcore gamers in that it actually offers a physical controller to hold. Shooters, for example, will feel a lot like they do on the Wii. Most gamers are used to holding something while they game, so the Move may feel more natural. But a major drawback for the Move (and Kinect as well) is that, historically, gamers have been loathe to pay for system add-ons once they've already purchased the console itself. The music-game explosion of a few years ago shows that it's not an unbreakable tenet, though; all it takes is one killer app to get gamers to open their wallets.

On foot he'd be doomed. With that office chair he is a small, speeding god.

▼ Busting moves ranks just behind riding furniture in mob-evasion efficacy.

Stool theft: it's all fun and games until it happens to you.

KUNG FU RIDER

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment America
Developer: SCE Japan Studio Platforms: PS3

When we first saw *Kung Fu Rider* at E3 we thought it was a joke. Racing around the streets of Hong Kong on office furniture? Well, *Kung Fu Rider* is most definitely real and it's actually a fun (if not very deep) game. Designed for up to two players, the game's premise is simple enough: You, a private detective named Toby, and your assistant Karin, have run afoul of the local mobsters, and your only means of escape, obviously, is office furniture. The fact that you race around Hong Kong on chairs quickly becomes somewhat of an afterthought, since what you're travelling on is basically irrelevant. The gameplay is superfast and frenetic as you attempt to collect items and unlock 12 new vehicles across the game's 27 courses, which cover six "unique" areas of Hong Kong. Playing with the Move Controller actually took us longer than expected to get used to. You lay down by pressing Move buttons, while steering is a function of moving the Controller. I found myself getting confused a lot and trying to pull the Controller back to lay down instead of hitting the trigger. All in all, though, *Kung Fu Rider* is a fun game, and gamers who like wacky titles that are easy to get into will no doubt dig it.

❤ A really fun (and funny) game to play
❤ Easy to get into
Innovative

✖ Not terribly deep

SPORTS CHAMPIONS

▼ Immediately take a break if you start seeing yellow light streaks trailing your arrows.

WHAT'S GREAT:

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

OVERALL RATING:

4

The invasive EyePet species has consumed all the fish, ruining yet another ecosystem.

Okay, we're just about certain someone spiked the Kool-Aid.

Drawing rainbow stars is an excellent use of your new $100 hardware peripheral.

EYEPET

Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment America • Developer: SCE London Studios • Platforms: PS3

Ever since Nintendogs' crazy success, game makers have been obsessed with so-called "virtual pets," and Sony Move and Microsoft Kinect are perfect ways for would-be "pet owners" to interact with these pixelized pets. *EyePet*'s claim to fame is that it doesn't live on-screen, but rather in your living room...and it does this rather well. Using the PlayStation Eye camera and Move controller, you can feed, wash, and groom your little furball. You can also complete skill challenges with your pet to earn special items.

The most compelling part of *EyePet* is the pet-creation phase. I sat down with my 15-year-old daughter while she and her friends created a pet, and they could have spent all day just customizing it. Once you create the pet, the parenting begins and your pet does cute tricks. You can even tickle and poke it via the Eye camera. We have no doubt that *EyePet* will be successful; it just won't do much for more traditional "hardcore" gamers who prefer to shoot fascists and train Pokémon.

WHAT'S GREAT:

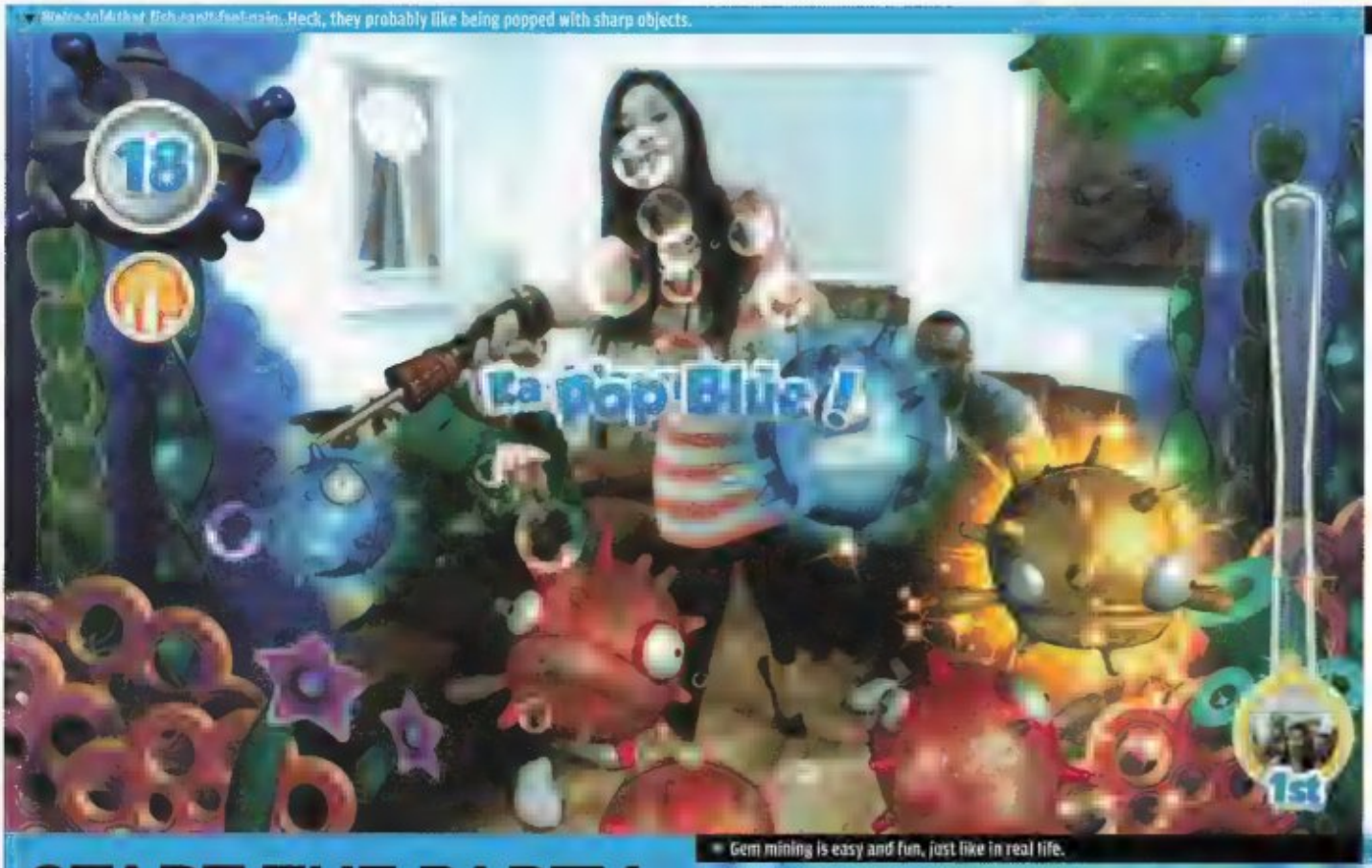
- 3D Dreadful is pretty cool
- The fur technology is awesome
- People will welcome being able to upload videos of the pet
- Kids will love it

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- Limited appeal

OVERALL RATING:

3/5



Heck, they probably like being popped with sharp objects.

START THE PARTY

Gem mining is easy and fun, just like in real life.

WHAT'S GREAT:

- Easy to jump into and figure out
- A good way to the Mov

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

OVERALL RATING:

Def Jam RAPSTAR
THE WORLD IS YOUR STAGE
defjamrapstar.com
I AM THE BEAST.
FEED ME RAPPERS OR FEED ME BEATS.
Lil Wayne
I AM NOT A HUMAN BEING
NEW ALBUM COMING SOON
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TOP PICKS

RATINGS BREAKDOWN:

- An average game, but worthy enough to call to your attention.
- A good game with some flaws. Fans of the genre will probably enjoy it.
- An excellent game that we strongly recommend.
- A near-perfect gaming experience.

60 HALO: REACH
How does Bungie's final Halo match up with the franchise's previous chapters?

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2K Games and the series creator team up once more to bring you their latest world-builder.

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You'll need four versions of Marvel's comic web-slinger to complete this action-adventure.

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Lead Batman and a large collection of DC superheroes to victory.

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Wii owners get a new take on Tolkien's classic fantasy tales.

82 FRONT MISSION EVOLVED
Manage your mighty Wanzer mech and shoot your way out of trouble.

84 TOM CLANCY'S H.A.W.X. 2
Take to the skies again for intense aerial combat and bombing runs.

87 NHL 2K11
The Wii gets this year's installment all to itself.

Hey, meet the crew!

@GAMER wants you to know about the best-of-the-best games out now or coming soon, so we've put together a different kind of Geek Squad to help you out.

Lizzie Cuevas

Lizzie loves FPSes and is practically married to Master Chief. When she's not dreaming about his MJOLNIR armor, she produces video content for GamesRadar.com. Favorite Halloween costume worn: Zoey from Left 4 Dead.

Mitch Dyer

Mitch is a freelance writer and university student living in Alberta, Canada. His love for writing, games, cartoons and sandwiches knows no bounds. Favorite Halloween costume worn: A lobster suit with pincers.

Julian "Jaz" Rignall

A Neanderthal from gaming magazine prehistory, Jaz has been reviewing games since they went "bleep...bloop." He turns the outside light off and pretends not to be home on Halloween, so his WoW gaming doesn't get interrupted. Bah humbug.

Timothy Seppala

Timothy is a freelance writer, college student, and auto-collision technician from Grand Rapids, Michigan. His plate is rather full, and he likes steak. Favorite Halloween costume worn: Slimer from "Ghostbusters."

The energy sword never fails to be a cool weapon to wield in a battle.

HALO: REACH

While *Halo: Reach* marks the end of Bungie and Microsoft's exclusive publishing relationship, it's hardly the end of the sci-fi saga that gamers adore. In fact, *Halo: Reach* is about the beginning of the saga, before Master Chief's adventures fighting the Covenant on the Halo ring worlds. But as a game, it's the most advanced in the series, featuring new gameplay concepts, expanded vehicular combat, and a ton of enhancements to the already expansive multiplayer.

Longtime fans of the series shouldn't [illegible] however. At its core, *Halo: Reach* plays exactly the same way as every other game in the series. You can take that as a good thing or a bad thing. But there are plenty of other components to make the game seem fresh and new. The character-centric narrative is similar to *Halo 3: ODST*, featuring a cast of side characters who flesh out the storyline and act as AI-controlled teammates. It can be very compelling, and the overall story is probably one of the most emotionally satisfying in the *Halo* oeuvre so far.

HALO: REACH IS BUNGIE'S LOVE LETTER TO THE FANS

The game feels largely the same as before, [illegible] to the gameplay to add depth. Vehicle [illegible] expanded with a fun [illegible] shooter segment, and another level [illegible] flying around a large [illegible] in the UNSC Falcon helicopter. The powerful new rocket Warthog also seems like a gift to longtime fans. But most of the combat is on the ground, and feels much the same as it always did, with some cool new weapons for you to play with.

One can't escape the feeling that the game is full of ideas and levels that were planned, but never implemented in the previous *Halo* titles. Nothing feels tacked on, but some levels—like the nightclub scene—don't seem quite up to the quality of level design we've come to expect. Still, this is *Halo*, and the bar remains as high as ever, and 95% of the time the nail is hit squarely on the head. This may not be the greatest or most refined of all of the *Halo* experiences, but gamers will not want for variety. *Halo: Reach* is Bungie's love letter to the fans—and it should be received warmly.

▲ Humanity's only hope against the Covenant... at least until Master Chief shows up.

NOBLE TEAM

The concept of being part of a team of unique individuals was first floated in *Halo 3: ODST*, and reaches its nadir in *Halo: Reach*. You will become emotionally invested in your Noble Team compadres, such as the tech-savvy Kat, Jun the sniper, Jorge the heavy weapons guy, Emile the skull-faced tough, and team leader Carter. It would be a treat to see them again, and would have been a bigger treat to play as each of them.

MULTIPLAYER GAMEPLAY \\

▲ The Jet Pack is great fun, but leaves you exposed.

Once again, Halo's highly customizable gameplay sets the bar very high. Everything you've been able to play before is included here, in addition to some great new game modes, such as the objective-based Invasion mode, the zombie-themed Infection, and the multi-flag capturing Stockpile. The ridiculously frantic Juggernaut mode may be my favorite, though. Kill the guy with the gravity hammer, become him, then kill as many of your pursuers as you can.

AS A GAME, *HALO: REACH* IS THE MOST ADVANCED IN THE SERIES

▼ Noble Six's classified background as a pilot will come in very handy at times.

EVOLVING THE SERIES: TOYS FOR THE BIG BOYS

Additions to the vehicle combat may be fun, but they're only part of how the series has grown. The inclusion of weapon loadouts and character classes for multiplayer adds critical depth that plenty of other games have explored already. But the new power-ups really change the game. Now you can give yourself various abilities as you traverse the world, giving you offensive and defensive advantages. Sprint is nice, as is the Active Camo ability, but the Jet Pack and Hologram decoy abilities are the real game changers here. They're available in the campaign and multiplayer.

HALO: RETRO

The look of the units and weapons of the factions in Halo: Reach—especially amongst the Covenant—have a slight reverse-engineered look, in part because this is a prequel to the original series. As a result, there are tons of different armor and equipment looks that are a treat to the Halo design aficionado.

ANDY SAYS:

Oh, I've missed you, Warthog...and how you've changed. Rockets? Yes, please! Sure, Reach is similar to previous Halo games, but it's like throwing on an old pair of slippers...just with a bit more dirt and smoke.

XBOX 360

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

HALO: REACH

INFO
Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Bungie
Platforms: Xbox 360

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 16 players via Xbox Live, System Link, and split screen

GENRE
First-person shooter

RELEASE DATE
September 14, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Anyone who doesn't want to be the only one of their friends not playing it

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ It feels exactly like the *Halo* you've been playing all these years.
- ❤ A truly compelling narrative drives the action, making you care deeply for the characters.
- ❤ More ways to play multiplayer than all of its competitors combined.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ It feels exactly like the *Halo* you've been playing all these years.
- ✖ Weapon dual-wielding is sorely missed.

OUR GAMER
- The whole Warthog
- Sci-fi saga
- Multiplayer mayhem

OVERALL RATING: 4.5/5

GAME OF THE MONTH

ANDY SAYS:

The Civ franchise is legendary—yet I never got into it. Even without past experience, Civ V was comfortable to play.

PC

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

CIVILIZATION V

INFO
Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: Firaxis
Platforms: PC

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Internet-based play available for up to eight players

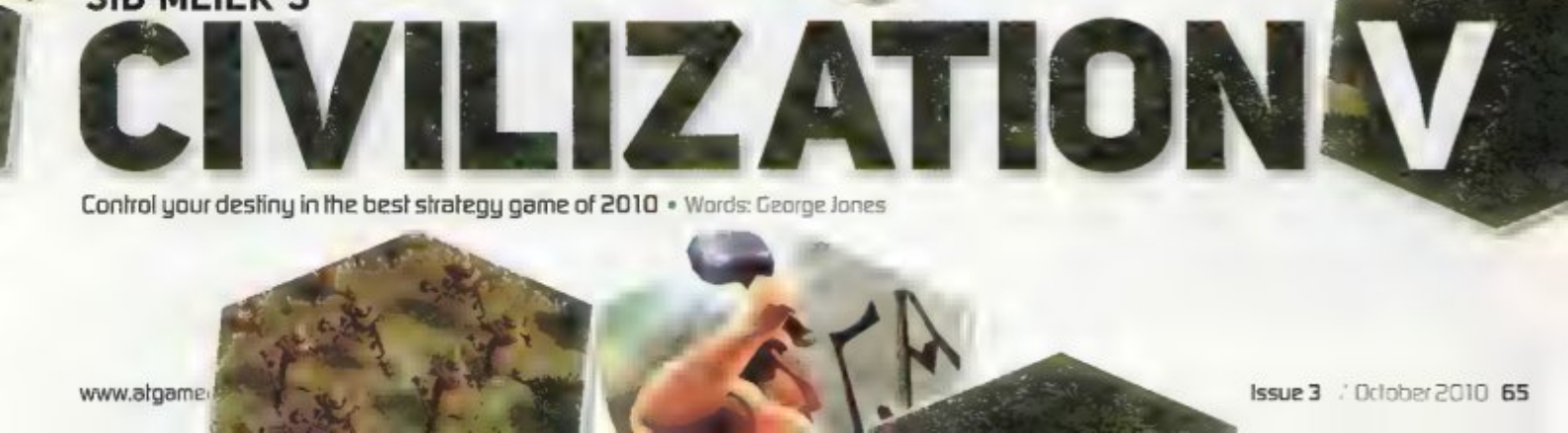
GENRE
Turn-based strategy

RELEASE DATE
September 21, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Smart gamers, older gamers, and fans of the series

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION V

Control your destiny in the best strategy game of 2010 • Words: George Jones



CIV V HAS BEEN RE-ENGINEERED TO BE FASTER-PACED, LESS TEDIOUS, AND MUCH EASIER TO PLAY

Sid Meier's Civilization V is a strategy game that allows you to experience the kind of moments that no other game has ever allowed. The joy of discovering the Great Barrier Reef. The thrill of building the Great Pyramids. The agony of losing a colony of settlers to native hosts. The prospect of nuclear war. The relief of escaping this war-torn planet for a new frontier.

If you've played and enjoyed a Civ game at any point, know this: When you finish reading this issue of @GAMER, you should run out and purchase *Civ V* immediately. If you aren't familiar with this series—which will hit its 20th anniversary next year—don't let the word "strategy" or the sweeping grandeur of the game intimidate you. *Civ V* is literally epic, but it's much easier to play than most people think.

The premise is simple: You choose a civilization—18 "tribes" are included, from Japanese to American to Russian to Iroquois—and begin the game with a single city. From here you try to guide your people to fertile lands, prosperous growth, and, in some cases, world dominance. You do this by exploring, building and developing new cities, improving the land around your city with roads, farms, and mines, and interacting with other would-be nations.

The beauty of the game is that how you realize the destiny of your people is entirely up to you. You don't have to build the largest army and wage war on your neighbors. You can aggressively develop a rich, wealthy nation through diplomacy, expansion, and resource management. Or you can create an enlightened, scientifically minded society that emphasizes knowledge over power. Or you can do all of the above. Or none.

SAY HELLO TO THE NEIGHBORS

This latest *Civ* has been re-engineered to be faster-paced, less tedious, and much easier to play. This new approach also extends to the game's visuals. The bright, colorful graphics and varied instrumental soundtrack will make you feel like you should be playing this on your big-screen TV instead of a small-ish PC flatscreen.

Much like in the real world, a big part of the game involves exploring the world and interacting with your neighbors. Officially, you'll be playing against one to seven other civilizations, but a number of neutral "City States" exist all over the map. The presence of these City States increases your level of interaction and diplomacy, and makes the game more engaging, even if they sometimes take on too large a role.

You'll probably also find yourself embroiled in a war at some point, and the manner in which *Civ V* handles combat is considerably more entertaining than in previous versions. All of a sudden, fighting battles and wars makes sense.

The addition of "social policies" is a welcome new feature, because it adds a cool philosophical layer of achievement and rewards. As your civilization grows, you're awarded with the ability to unlock a series of RPG-style rules that reflect your governing style and grant bonuses to your nation. These policies enable you to emphasize scientific pursuits, religion, financial development, and (of course) war.

One of the other great things about *Civ V* is that you can customize the game in any way you'd like. You can literally create your own world by customizing the climate, the geography, water levels, victory conditions, and more. In *Civ V*, the world is literally in your hands.

AM I YOUR FRIEND?

Civ V's artificial intelligence is remarkable and eerily human, particularly in the early stages of the game. When a competing leader contacts your civilization, you'll find yourself spending time ascertaining their ulterior motives. Much as with people, some AIs are friendly, and some are annoying.

FOUR WAYS TO WIN CIVILIZATION V \\

01 [redacted]

Assemble the largest army and conquer the world—specifically, each civilization's capital.

02 SPACE RACE

Be the first to assemble and launch a spaceship to a neighboring star. This is one of the coolest victories in the game.

03 DIPLOMACY

Gain support from other civilizations and City States in the United Nations. If they vote you in as Supreme Leader, you win.

04 UTOPIA PROJECT

Evolve your civilization into enlightenment by completing six of the game's new social policy trees.

CIVILIZED COMBAT

You may not prefer it, but over the course of 6,000 years, you're going to get involved in a war or two. In *Civilization V*, combat occurs on a smaller scale. Each unit takes up a single "tile" in the game, meaning you can't stack multiple units together. One other big change is that cities are now capable of defending themselves without the presence of military units.

CITY STATES IN CIVILIZATION V

Imagine spending 6,000 years on Earth with only five or six other nations. Sounds boring and lonely, right? To spice up *Civilization V*, Firaxis introduced City States, autonomous mini-nations you'll encounter once you settle your first city.

City States add lots of depth and diplomacy. You can befriend them, ally with them, take them on as commonwealths or vassals...or conquer them. But City States also have unique agendas. Some want to be friendly, while others aim to undermine your power. Understanding their motives is key to dealing with them.

At times, negotiations can be tedious and annoying, and it feels like they play too large a role in the game, particularly in the early years. However, over the course of an entire game, they add some interesting layers that make for a richer story.

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ❤ Epic, open-ended play lets you play aggressively, peacefully, or however you want
- ❤ Will run fine on mid- or even low-end PCs
- ❤ Refined combat makes for more entertaining wars

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Presence of autonomous City States can be distracting
- ✖ Games still take a long time to play

- Epic gameplay
- Intelligent AI
- One...more...turn

OVERALL RATING: 4.5/5

SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS

Are four Spideys better than one? • Words: Matt Cabral

PS3 XBOX 360 Wii DS

GAME DETAILS & RATINGS

SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Beenox
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii, DS

Single-player only

Third-person action

September 7, 2010

Webheads, Marvel fans, Mysterio-haters

Since the success of 2004's *Spider-Man 2*, Activision hasn't strayed too far from that title's basic formula: Set fans loose in a wide-open Big Apple to bust up bad guys and save civilians. While the tried-and-true recipe nails the web-slinging experience, recent entries have felt about as fresh as Spidey's spandex after a long night of crime-fighting. *Shattered Dimensions* finally switches things up, putting you in the suits of four unique Spider-Man characters, each battling through equally diverse worlds.

As Amazing, Ultimate, Noir, and 2099 Spider-Man, you traverse each version's respective universe, unleashing abilities specific to each wall-crawler's incarnation. This variety-packed presentation makes you feel like you're in four different games; the richly realized worlds (each with its own inspired art style) could easily support standalone titles. The Amazing and Ultimate worlds sport a pop-off-the-paneled-page cel-shaded look; bathed in black and white; Noir is darker, with an Arkham Asylum-like feel; and 2099 inhabits a neon-infused *Tron*-styled world. Dripping with details, all of the worlds have a what's-around-the-next-corner appeal.

When not ogling the scenery, you're battling bosses, each possessing a piece of the Tablet of Order and Chaos—the plot-driving MacGuffin stolen by Mysterio at the story's start. The 14 levels are like extended boss battles; you meet your nemesis in each stage's intro, chase and battle them intermittently, then meet for a level-capping showdown. Of course, when you're not one-on-one with the boss, levels are packed to bursting with low-level goons to keep you busy.

Thankfully, Peter Parker's quartet of alter egos can do more than spit webs and stick to walls. Noir Spidey does stealthy takedowns from the shadows, 2099 temporarily slows time, and Ultimate—donning the symbiote suit—unleashes rage attacks, filling the screen with foe-foiling black tendrils. There are also occasional first-person perspective fisticuffs, and you can spend collected spider emblems on upgrades, unlocked by completing in-game challenges (see "Souped-Up Spidey").

The problem with Spider-Man possessing so many skills is that they're not all polished. The shadow-sneaking gameplay isn't as solid as you'd find in a dedicated stealth game, and the dizzying combat diversity often gives way to imprecision. *Shattered Dimensions*' biggest issue, though, is its freedom-stifling design, which mostly keeps you grounded with linear, combat-focused levels. Flaws aside, *Shattered Dimensions* offers plenty of seat-of-your-spandex thrills, and many fans probably won't mind trading some freedom and gameplay polish for the chance to save the day with such flair. With a superhero-sized selection of costumes, worlds, powers, and villains, there's no doubt Spidey's latest has style to spare.

▲ Guns vs. webs? We'll bet on webs!

▲ The symbiote suit may be evil, but, man, is it fun.

▲ Acrobatics are essential to 2099 Spidey's survival.

▼ Each of *Shattered Dimensions*' levels is capped by an epic boss battle.

ROSTER OF ROGUES

Spidey's no superhero without the villains

Mysterio starts all of the trouble in *Shattered Dimensions*, but he's helped by a lethal line-up of villains, mutants, and scumbags. A virtual "who's who" of Spidey-haters, the roster includes some of Marvel's most iconic criminals, as well as some lesser-known cult favorites. Deadpool, Vulture, Hobgoblin, Kraven, Hammerhead, Electro, Sandman, and Scorpion are just a few of the evil-doers that'll set comic geeks' pulses spiking.

▲ Deadpool hosts a sinister game show Spidey has to win.

▲ Hammer-like fists aside, Juggernaut's a real sweetheart.

▲ Duking it out with Kraven in first-person fisticuffs.

▲ Hey, Vulture...ever heard of a breath mint?

▼ You'll want to pump up Spidey's powers before battling a boss.

SOUPED-UP SPIDEY

You'll want to collect all of those shiny Spider-Man emblems spread throughout *Shattered Dimensions*' levels. The shimmering bugs grant you essence, which you can use to purchase passive and active upgrades, such as extended life bars or the ability to temporarily blind baddies with a web shot. But before investing in these Spidey-enhancing goodies, you must unlock them by completing in-game tasks—pre-set challenges, such as spilling water on ten of Sandman's gritty goons or stringing up six of Hammerhead's henchmen. These are tracked on the "Web of Destiny," so you needn't rely on your Spidey sense tingling to tell you how close you are to your goals.

SPIDEY'S QUARTET OF ALTER-EGOS CAN DO MORE THAN SPIT WEBS AND STICK TO WALLS.

▼ PLATFORM-TO-PLATFORM DIFFERENCES

PS3/Xbox 360
Identical

Wii
Wii Remote-enhanced combat

DS
Side-scrolling action

WHAT'S GREAT:

- Four playable Spider-Man characters with tons of powers
- Four eye candy-coated worlds to traverse
- More than a dozen villains to smack down

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- Some of the game's play mechanics lack polish
- We're missing the open-world freedom of previous Spider-Man games

GAMER

- 4X action
- Web-swinging
- Baddie-busting

OVERALL RATING: 3.5/5

BEENOX, DONE THAT

This isn't the first time Canadian developer Beenox, whose resume includes kid-friendly fare such as *Monsters vs. Aliens* and *Bee Movie Game*, has spun Spidey's webs. *Shattered Dimensions* is the first Spider-Man game it's headed up, but the team previously did the PC ports of *Ultimate Spider-Man*, *Spider-Man: Friend or Foe*, and *Spider-Man 3*.

ANDY SAYS:

The last few Spider-Man games became repetitive, but I could spend hours just swinging through the New York City skies, taking Spidey all around the Big Apple. You can swing around in *Shattered Dimensions* a bit, but I hope they take us back to the open world in a future game.

R.U.S.E.

Your first RTS. + Words: Timothy J. Seppala

▼ Gorgeous cut-scenes flesh out the story between gameplay missions.

▲ Flame-throwing tanks can toast your entire army. Take them out first!

This year has been a rich one for strategy games, as sequels for StarCraft and Civilization have ignited the passions of long-time series devotees. If you're new to the genre, though, they could be more than a little intimidating...and neither are coming to a home console soon. *R.U.S.E.* offers a beginner-friendly take on what's often regarded as a hardcore game style and does so without sacrificing the depth that RTS fans count on.

R.U.S.E. focuses on action and intelligence maneuvers (known as ruses) rather than base-building and tech trees. Early missions bypass construction tasks for combat basics. You can only place military bases, supply depots, and barracks in predetermined locations, and once they're constructed you're done with them. This eliminates a huge amount of micro-management, so you can focus on waging war.

THERE AREN'T BLACK AREAS ON THE MAP TO OBSCURE YOUR VIEW

Ruses are simple yet powerful. "Decryption," for example, lets you discover your opponent's movement intentions. Another, called "Spy," reveals units tucked behind enemy lines. Each ruse temporarily affects a quadrant of the map. You can even stack and combine them to create new tactics. Ruses are key to surviving the game's lengthy campaign.

Combat is streamlined as well. When selecting a unit, its effective attack radius displays onscreen, and targeting an enemy shows your chances of defeating it, eliminating the guesswork you'd need in other RTS games. *R.U.S.E.* even calculates the odds of victory in complex multi-unit situations. In other strategy games, attacks can take you by total surprise. Here, it's different—you can see where most enemies are at all times. There isn't any "fog of war" (or blacked-out areas) obscuring your view.

Saying *R.U.S.E.* is like a bike with training wheels makes it sound too simplistic (which it's not), but it's a great starting place if you're itching to try an RTS. The huge campaign, fun collection of ruses, and multiplayer should be enough to satisfy strategy nuts looking for something different, too. Especially after battling aliens and taking over the world.

Behold the war map. Zooming out all of the way gives you a clear view of the entire battlefield. This isn't just eye candy, because you can control an entire match from this viewpoint.

Uh-oh. Standing around and spectating might not be the best plan of this juncture.

WAR IS ~~H*LL~~ fun!

ANDY SAYS:

One of R.U.S.E.'s best features is the ability to zoom out from the gameplay and have units turn into icons, which provides a good overview of the battlefield. However, everything keeps moving in real time, so you still get a feel for what's going on.

THE CONSOLE CONNECTION

While we spent most of our time playing the PC version, the console versions played great, too. Aside from the obvious input differences, we didn't notice anything missing. The controls, a major sticking point in past console RTSes, are quite intuitive. The left stick controls horizontal and vertical movement, while the right stick pans and zooms the camera. Face and shoulder buttons handle unit selection and orders.

RTS purists should go for the PC version, of course, because it enables mapping units to separate keys on the keyboard, making complex attacks easier. Console gamers, though, will enjoy the best console RTS controls to date.

PS3 XBOX 360 PC

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

R.U.S.E.

INFO
Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Eugen Systems
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 8 players online

GENRE
Real-time strategy

RELEASE DATE
September 7, 2010

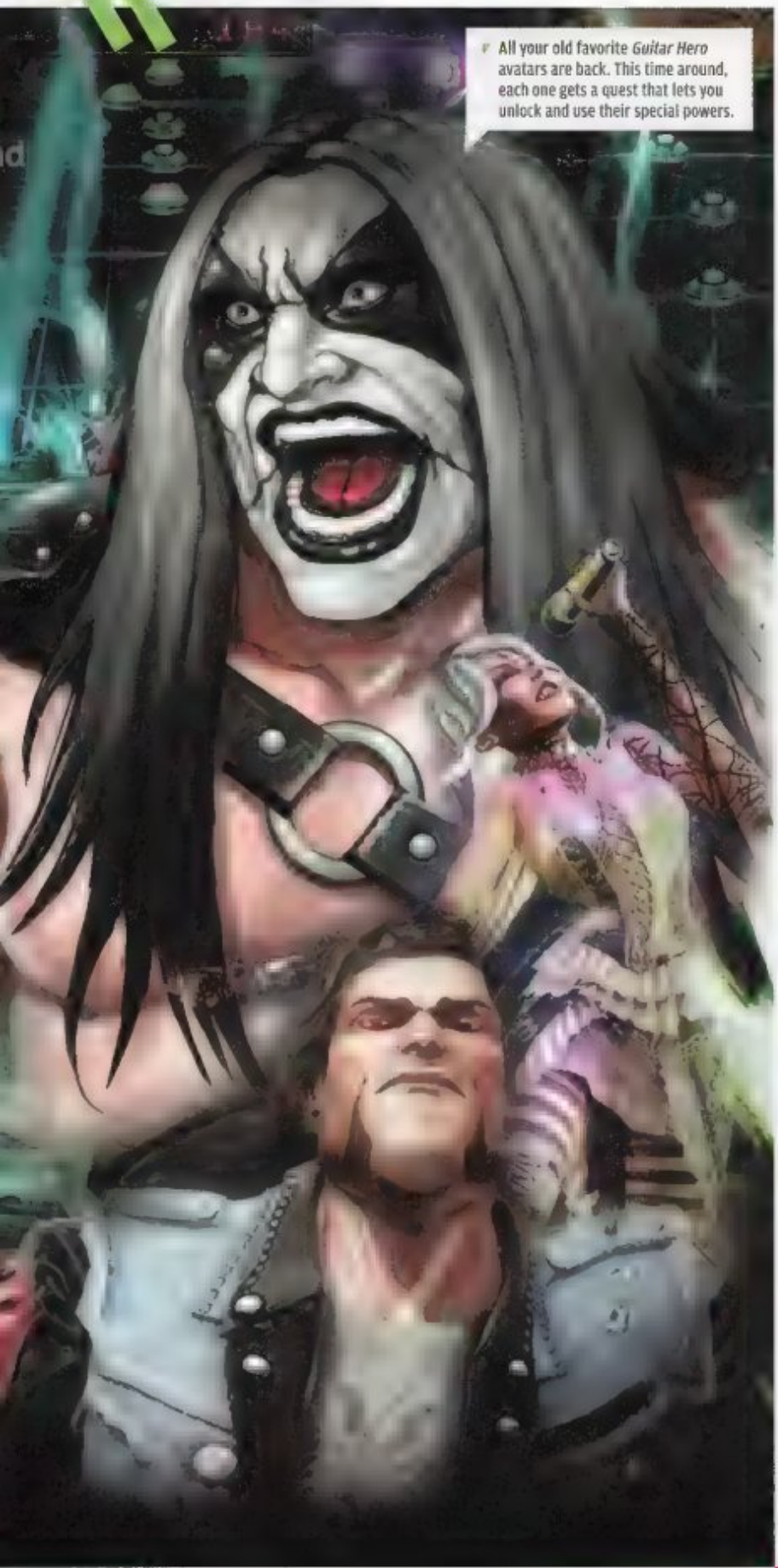
SUITABLE FOR
RTS neophytes and veterans, sneaky people

WHAT'S GREAT:
- New RTS players can cut their teeth and have loads of fun right away
- Ruses add new depth and strategy to the RTS experience
- Console versions control extremely well

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Some of the voice acting could be better
- Hardcore players may not like all of the hand-holding

@GAMER
- Nazi-killing
- Deception
- Spies!

OVERALL RATING: 4/5



All your old favorite *Guitar Hero* avatars are back. This time around, each one gets a quest that lets you unlock and use their special powers.

GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

After taking a series of increasingly mainstream steps, the *Guitar Hero* franchise is rocking back to its roots

• Words: Jaz Rignall

Unless you've been hiding under a rock for the past five years—rather than playing along to it—the *Guitar Hero* phenomenon won't be new to you. The progenitor powerhouse of the plastic instrument-driven music-game genre has spawned five generations of sequels, and added additional gameplay features, new instruments, and a broadened music selection along the way.

While many have welcomed these changes as making the series more accessible to casual players, fans of *Guitar Hero*'s more hardcore origins have decried them as essentially selling out, softening a series that was built on rock and roll. However, it seems that Activision is listening to the faithful followers who've been around since the start: *Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock* takes the series back to its roots with a setlist that boasts a veritable smörgåsbord of solid, guitar-focused rock songs.

So, the game's gonna rock. But how does it roll? Well, the gameplay's tuning, much like the game's tunes, is also a throwback to the old-school *Guitar Hero* we've known and loved. The first game had controls that were fairly forgiving, letting you fat-finger a fret here and there, but still get away with it. Later, the controls become increasingly fussy and precise, which sometimes felt overly punishing and even occasionally frustrating. Now it's back to feeling just right. Tight, but not overly so. The overall feel is confidence-inspiring and encourages you to aspire to greater heights, rather than take an easier route because you're worried you'll get dinged for making a bum note. End result: The game is much more fun.

And that's pretty much my overall take on *Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock*. It feels more finessed than most recent versions, and its rock focus definitely brings back the edge it lost. The Quest Mode adds a bit of a twist to the gameplay, Quickplay+ with its tons of challenges helps add some lasting appeal, and the much-improved Party Mode properly caters to the often chaotic way that large groups of people play.

But, and of course there's a "but": *Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock* does tread a well-worn path, evolving the series a couple of steps forward by taking a couple of steps back. It's a refocus, a return to basics that fans of the early games in the series will absolutely love. But those on the fence will probably want to stay there... at least until they see what the competition has to offer.

ALL-NEW QUEST MODE!

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock's big new feature is its Quest Mode, in which you can unlock the backstories, usable special powers, and custom Warrior looks of the game's eight signature characters. The ultimate objective is to free the Demigod of Rock and defeat the Beast who imprisoned him. This questline is based on Rush's epic progressive-rock album, 2112, which is featured in the game in its seven-track entirety!

ANDY SAYS:

I like that the game fleshes out the characters in Quest Mode—making them more than just our onscreen surrogate avatars. Lars Ümlaüt FTW!

WHOA, FANCY AXE, MAN

ROCK AND ROLL ALL NIGHT

For its sixth outing, *Guitar Hero*'s music selection is tightly focused on rock genres. There's metal in a variety of flavors from hair to heavy, classic, and prog rock, alternative and punk from a variety of decades, '90s grunge, a smidge of early New Wave, and even some straight-up AOR. Initial shipments of the game will include an audio CD of the new Soundgarden retrospective album, which will eventually be available as downloadable content.

PS3 XBOX 360 Wii

GAME DETAILS // RATINGS

GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Neversoft/ Vicarious Visions
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii

MULTIPLAYER MODE
Up to four (local or online)

GENRE
Music

RELEASE DATE
September 28, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Wannabe rockers of all ages, wielding the appropriate instruments

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ❤ Gameplay feels more finessed than previous versions
- ❤ It's back to the original rock focus, and once again the guitar is the star
- ❤ Quest Mode adds a new twist to the gameplay

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Doesn't really push the music genre forward
- ✖ Rock focus means it loses some of its wider audience appeal

GAMER

- More rock
- More finely tuned
- More of the same

OVERALL RATING: 4/5

BATMAN
THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD
THE VIDEOGAME

The not-so-Dark Knight returns • Words: Chuck Osborn

If you only know Batman as the grim, brooding superhero of games such as *Batman: Arkham Asylum*, then you probably haven't been watching Cartoon Network lately. *Batman: The Brave and the Bold* is a groovy animated series that pays homage to the campier Silver Age Caped Crusader of the '50s and '60s, teaming him up with at least one other DC Comics hero each episode. Similarly, the game based on the show is a nostalgic revamp of

THE GAME WORKS WELL AS AN UPDATE OF ARCADE BUTTON-MASHERS

classic 2D side-scrolling, jump-and-punch action games from the '80s and '90s.

Playing solo or in co-op mode, you control Batman and another hero (like Robin, Blue Beetle, Green Lantern, and Hawkman) in "episodes" that have them face off against the show's familiar villains, such as Catwoman, Gorilla Grodd, and Gentleman Ghost. Combat is kept simple, with punches and uppercuts; achieve super punches by shaking the Wii Remote, and perform powerful heroic attacks by shaking both the Wii Remote and Nunchuk simultaneously. Once you've clobbered enough bad guys and charged up the hero meter, you can even call on one of several secondary heroes (Green Arrow, Aquaman, Black Canary, etc.) to drop in and, like an arcade "smart bomb," decimate all the villains onscreen.

Exclusive to Wii and DS, the game works well as an update of arcade button-mashers, with plenty of secret areas to discover, upgradeable weapons, and witty repartee to keep fans playing. For some it may be too simplistic, however, especially when compared to other superhero games out there (like this month's *Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions*). Also, call me old-fashioned, but I miss having a gamepad. The Wii Remote/Nunchuk combo feels awkward when playing a beat-em-up like this, which seems tailor-made for a standard gamepad.

The visuals are as gaudy and vivid as the cartoon series upon which they're based, and the voiceover work is ably performed by the show's cast. The animations, however, especially in the Wii version, are a little too old-school. They're so stiff you may think you're playing the DS version on a big screen.

Younger gamers—the target audience, admittedly—probably won't care. *Batman: The Brave and the Bold* is a fun two-player co-op game for that lets you give a rock-'em, sock-'em wallop to the jaws of villainy.

▲ Both heroes work in tandem to pummel henchmen and then defeat the supervillain bosses in each episode.

▲ Green Lantern hulks out (oops, wrong universe!) to help out Batman.

▲ As a teenager, Robin rebels against authority (like ol' Pointy Ears).

While Batman is a constant throughout the game, you (or a second player) can also choose to play as Bats' partner in each episode. A petulant teen Robin, bothered that his mentor gets all the attention, joins Batman first. The fledgling hero Blue Beetle is next, intimidated by the Caped Crusader's immense experience. You'll also have the opportunity to play as the ring-slinging Green Lantern and the winged warrior Hawkman. Each hero has his own unique gadgets and attacks.

A LOOK BEHIND THE SCREENS

IMP MY RIDE

Link the DS and Wii versions of the game to unlock Bat-Mite, a magical imp from the 5th Dimension who idolizes Batman, as a playable character that can be controlled with the DS. You can either help or hinder our hero depending on how mischievous you are. (Now you know why the game is a Wii/DS exclusive!)

ANDY SAYS:

Make no mistake—*The Brave and the Bold* isn't an *Arkham Asylum* sequel, but it's not intended to be either. It does a decent job of representing the cartoon, so fans should appreciate it on that level.

Wii DS

GAME DETAILS // RATINGS

BATMAN: THE BRAVE AND THE BOLD -THE VIDEOGAME

Publisher: Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment
Developer: WayForward
Platforms: Wii, DS

Two-player co-op

Action side-scroller

September 7, 2010

Fans of the TV show and old-school 2D platformers

- ❤ High-quality writing and voice acting
- ❤ Fun co-op gameplay
- ❤ 2D platformers rule!

- ✖ Wii controls take some getting used to
- ✖ Stiff animations
- ✖ May be too simplistic for hardcore gamers

- Batty
- Campy
- Co-op-y

OVERALL RATING:

2.5/5

NHL 11

Skate blades are sharp...and so is EA's latest hockey sim •

There are times in a race—track and field, NASCAR, whatever—when whoever's out in front has such a lead that they can kind of coast to the win. EA Sports is in that position with NHL 11, at least for the HD consoles, after 2K Sports decided to make NHL 2K11 a Wii-exclusive this year (see our review on page 87). The good thing is, EA didn't just take copies of NHL 10, repackage it as NHL 11, and ship it to stores. There are numerous improvements and additions in NHL 11.

Most notable among them is the addition of what EA calls "a real-time physics engine." This makes the action more realistic, so if the puck hits a body or a stick lying on the ice, it changes direction and speed accordingly. One goal I scored hit the goalie on the shoulder, popped in the air, dropped behind him, and wobbled over the goal line. Random stick breakage has also been added, which can affect a shot or create an obstacle for puck or skater. (Being able to jump over something in your path, after flipping the puck up, is another sweet improvement.)

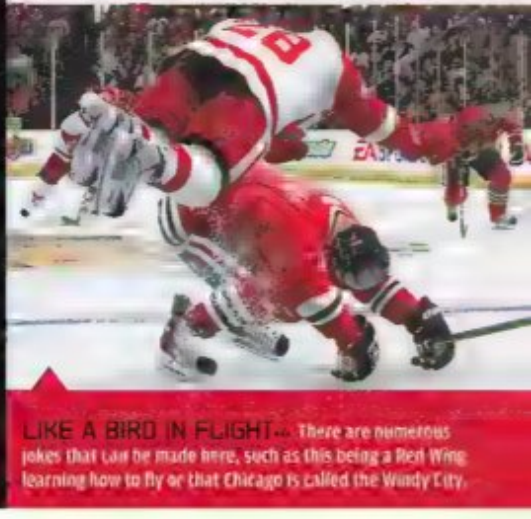
In general, skater control in NHL 11 has been improved—and made more natural, much like in EA's Fight Night series—via context-sensitive actions mapped to the analog sticks. Mostly, the left stick controls the body (the direction you're skating or delivering a check), but if you're sending a pass or shot, it indicates where you want the puck to go. Similarly, the right stick controls the hands (puck control, stick-handling dekes and shoving another player), so a slapshot is as natural as pulling back and quickly pushing forward. Face-offs have also benefited: The right stick is used to pull the puck back when it hits the ice, but you can also change your grip on the stick, lift the opponent's stick up right before, or pivot your body around to try and gain position.

Interaction between puck and stick still needs work—a flaw that's more obvious when you jump into the powerful replay system. Often, the puck seems to magically achieve speed and trajectory even without much stick being put into the shot, so there are many areas that EA needs to improve. Until then, though, with a deep single-player offering and competitive multiplayer, NHL 11 should still give us plenty of grins and goals.

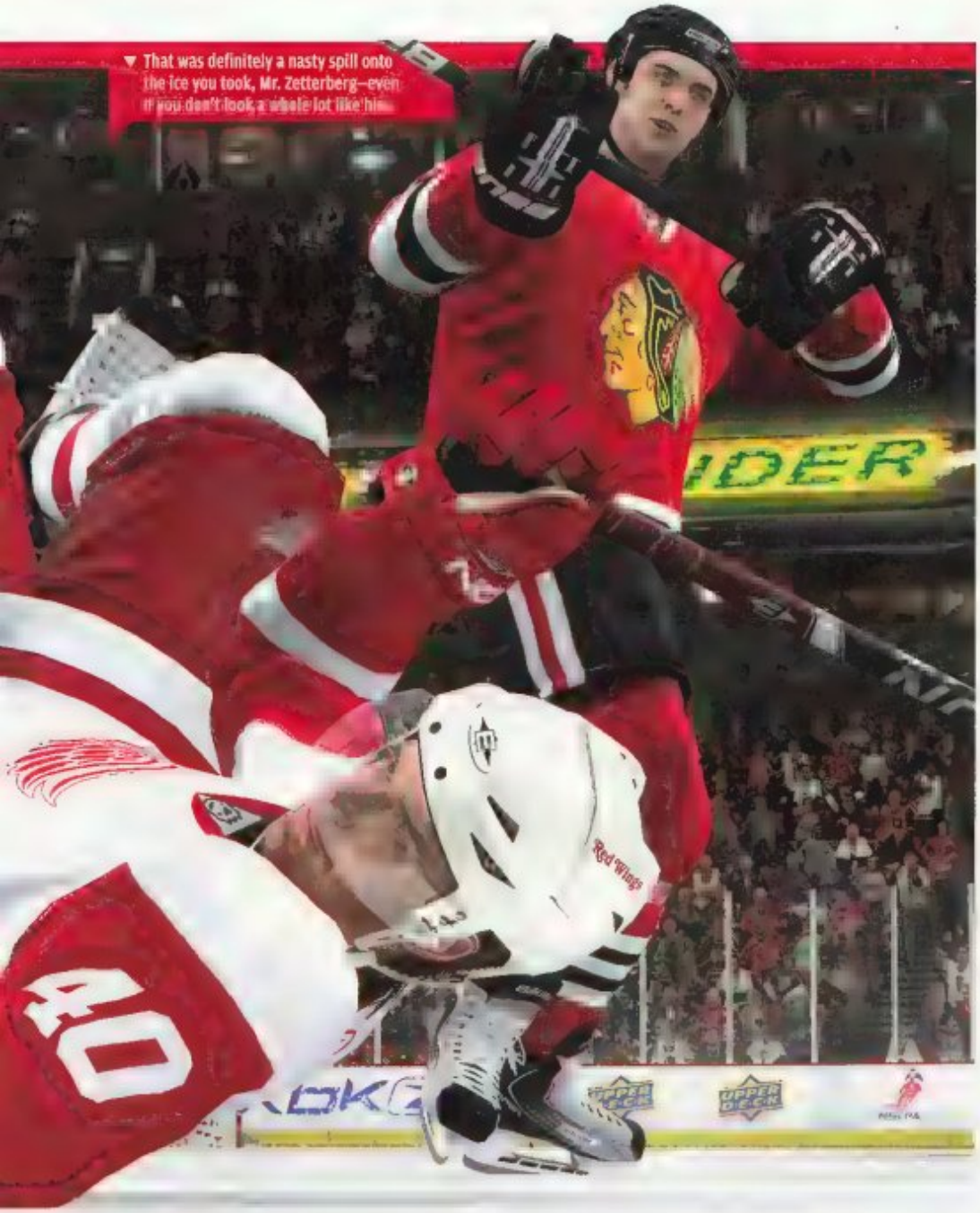
BEING ABLE TO JUMP OVER SOMETHING IN YOUR PATH IS ANOTHER SWEET IMPROVEMENT.

WIL SAYS:

NHL 11 could be a spectator sport, even for those who aren't hockey fans. I was watching over Andy's shoulder, and my jaw dropped open when a shot hit high on the inside of the net and the goalie's water bottle went flying.



LIKE A BIRD IN FLIGHT— There are numerous jokes that can be made here, such as this being a Red Wing learning how to fly or that Chicago is called the Windy City.



▼ That was definitely a nasty spill onto the ice you took, Mr. Zetterberg—even if you don't look a whole lot like him.

PS3 XBOX 360

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

NHL 11

INFO
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: EA Canada
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 12 players online or 4 players on the same console

GENRE
Sports

RELEASE DATE
September 7, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Hockey enthusiasts, but the puck-curious also have a well-paved road to entry

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ❤ One-on-one body checks are effective—and enjoyable!
- ❤ Player and stick control is smooth and easy
- ❤ Online games with 12 players are a blast

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Puck physics still need more improvement
- ✖ Players' faces don't look as true-to-life as in other EA Sports games

CARD TRICKS

Be a Pro and Be a GM are both back, giving you the ability to bring a player up from juniors to the NHL and build a team up from the general manager's chair, respectively. The new Hockey Ultimate Team mode, however, adds a whole different layer, by using "cards" to build a team to compete in a fantasy-style EA Ultimate Hockey League. There are cards for players (using 4100 real players from 10 leagues), but also for arenas, contracts, and even your team's logo/jersey. Card trading will spice things up, or you can buy new decks from EA's in-game store, spending either cash or "pucks" that you've earned during gameplay. EA will crown a champion every calendar month in three divisions (Amateur, Pro and Elite), and if you happen to stumble upon that person's rink, you'll see a banner raised as an indicator of their status. EA could have a big winner here.

@GAMER

- Fantastic physics
- Deke party
- Puck magic

OVERALL RATING: 4.5/5

John Rhys-Davies reprises his role as Gimli, the dwarf.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: ARAGORN'S QUEST

The lone Ranger finally plays the lead • Words: Chuck Osborn

Once upon a time, there was a very famous trilogy of fantasy novels that became required reading for the adventurous at heart. Eventually, that trilogy was turned into a successful series of live-action movies, accompanied by a slew of video games based on them. But, alas, the end of the story was truly the end and there could be no more games from whence to wring out the last drips of licensed goodness...or could there?

The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest focuses on the exploits of the eponymous Aragorn, otherwise known as the sword-wielding ranger Strider from J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy series. Because EA owns both the book and movie licenses, the storyline liberally borrows from both versions, and even creates its own post-LotR continuity by framing the adventures as stories told to young Frodo, the son of hobbit Samwise Gamgee, many years after the books take place. You'll alternate between playing as Aragorn—slashing his way through his greatest battles from the books and movies armed with his sword, shield, and bow—and little Frodo, as he begins his own quest.

Combat differs based on which version you pick up. The PS3 edition supports the PlayStation Move motion-control system (though it's not necessary), allowing you to hack-and-slash Aragorn's sword using the controller, as does the Wii version. Strike right with your Wii Remote and Aragorn's sword will make a slash to the right; thrust forward with your Nunchuk and Aragorn's shield will slam into an enemy. The PS2 and PSP versions are more traditionally controlled with gamepads, while the DS edition makes use of the stylus and touch screen.

THE STORYLINE BORROWS FROM BOTH THE BOOKS AND MOVIES

As you quest, you'll be able to upgrade your equipment and also discover artifacts that give you special bonuses, which add depth to an otherwise straightforward action game. Visually, the game is all over the place: Cut-scenes in Hobbiton can be crisp and vibrant, while actual gameplay is fuzzy and definitely "last generation"-ish. The familiar soundtrack from the movies is augmented by the vocal chops of actors Sean Astin and John Rhys-Davies, who reprise their roles of Samwise and Gimli.

Aragorn's Quest has enough to do and discover to keep fans of the movies entertained. If it weren't for the game's dull and often murky graphics, we might recommend it even more.

In the Wii version, wield your Wii Remote and Nunchuk as if they were your sword and shield, respectively.

Sam, is that you? Some characters look more like caricatures of the movies' actors.

ELF GUY — **Maybe you'll star in a game one day, Legolas.**

ANDY SAYS:

Aragorn's Quest is a well-handled side-step from the books and films, giving players new adventures in a familiar setting. And co-op is a plus, enabling two to share it all.

GO, GO, GANDALF

A special feature in the PS3 and Wii versions of Aragorn's Quest is the ability for a second player to play as the wizard Gandalf in certain sections of the game. For adults with kids or teens with younger siblings, this unique co-op mode is an excellent way to allow novice players to play alongside more experienced players at the same time.

PS3 Wii PS2 PSP DS

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: ARAGORN'S QUEST

INFO
Publisher: Warner Bros. Interactive
Developer: TT Fusion Games (PS3, PS2, PSP, DS), Headstrong Games (Wii)
Platforms: PS3, Wii, PS2, PSP, DS

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Two-player co-op (PS3 and Wii only)

GENRE
Third-Person Action/Adventure

RELEASE DATE
September 14, 2010 for all platforms

SUITABLE FOR
Swashbucklers and LotR completists

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Lots of Aragorn, slicing and dicing enemies
- ❤ An inventive way to expand LotR lore
- ❤ Good use of motion controls in PS3 and Wii versions

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Not the best-looking game in the Shire
- ✖ The Frodo side story may detract if you just want to play as Aragorn
- ✖ No Xbox 360 version?

- Strider
- Slashing
- Blurry

OVERALL RATING: 3/5

Warning: *Front Mission Evolved*'s huge explosions may cause eargasms.

FRONT MISSION EVOLVED

Gentlemen, start your wanzers... • Words: Lizzie Cuevas

If you're a fan of Square's *Front Mission* franchise, which dates back to the Super Nintendo days, *Front Mission Evolved* may feel a bit unfamiliar. While the mechs—or "wanzers," as they're called—are still present, the game has evolved from a turn-based strategy game into a full-fledged third-person shooter.

It's the year 2171 A.D. and Dylan Ramsey, a 23-year-old engineer, is working on his own wanzer (named Wiz) when unidentified wanzers attack New York City, putting his father in danger. Like any loving son, Dylan hops into his mech and sets off to find his father, meeting some friends (and foes) along the way.

At the outset your multi-faceted killing machine comes equipped with a melee weapon, a machine gun, and a missile launcher. You can equip up to four weapons—right arm, left arm, right shoulder, and left shoulder—on top of a skill-boosting "backpack." You start out with an Agility backpack, which enables you to maneuver the bulky hunk of metal around a lot faster—perfect for evading enemy attacks. The handy Storage backpack, meanwhile, holds more ammunition for your equipped weapons, while the EMP v.A backpack emits a pulse that temporarily disables enemy units within a certain radius. The possibilities are many.

After finishing each mission, you get a chance to use your earnings to modify your wanzer. As you'd expect, swapping weapons affects your battle capabilities, but so does customizing your wanzer's torso, arms, and legs from a broad selection of body parts. These choices naturally have trade-offs: Increasing your armor may decrease mobility, for instance. Completing secondary mission objectives (such as wiping out an army of enemy wanzers without your squad's help) will add to your discretionary funds.

Front Mission Evolved is easy enough to pick up and play for those new to third-person shooters and mech-type games, but still tough enough for headshot veterans. In fact, the boss fights are particularly fun and challenging, although at times long. While you may be able to get through each mission at a steady pace, sometimes it seems as though the boss fights last forever, which may feel a bit repetitive. Ultimately, though, *Evolved* is a wonderfully fresh mech shooter that doesn't feel as sluggish as other mech games. With fast-paced battles and thundering explosions, it'll be a lot of fun for anyone who might pick it up.

▼ Tanks are no match for your customized wanzer.

CRASH. BOOM. BANG.

Hand in hand with Evolved's stunning graphics is the amazing sound design. Using Dolby Digital technology, the game offers an epic surround-sound experience. This is especially notable in the violent medley of explosions, gunshots, and metal-on-metal mech action. And with over an hour of intense battle scenes and other cinematics, it'll hopefully be music to your ears, even without a high-end speaker setup.

PLAY WELL WITH OTHERS

▲ Lead your squad through Campaign Mode or take it out to the 'net for some online multiplayer action.

Though we weren't able to test it, the game's PC version supports Nvidia 3D Vision technology. PC gamers with a compatible Nvidia video card and a 120Hz display will be able to experience the game in stereoscopic 3-D. The mode will really bring the wanzers to life—but try to avoid ducking enemy gunfire at your computer desk. You don't want to look silly.

ANDY

Speaking of "evolved," it's cool to see Square Enix take chances, not only with different game styles, but also other developers. *FME* is another project with a U.S. studio, Double Helix; earlier this year, it teamed with Seattle-area dev Gas Powered Games on *Supreme Commander 2*.

PS3 XBOX 360 PC

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

FRONT MISSION EVOLVED

INFO
Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: Double Helix
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Competitive online modes for up to 8 players

GENRE
Third-person shooter

RELEASE DATE
September 28, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Long-time *Front Mission* fans and newcomers alike

WHAT'S GREAT:

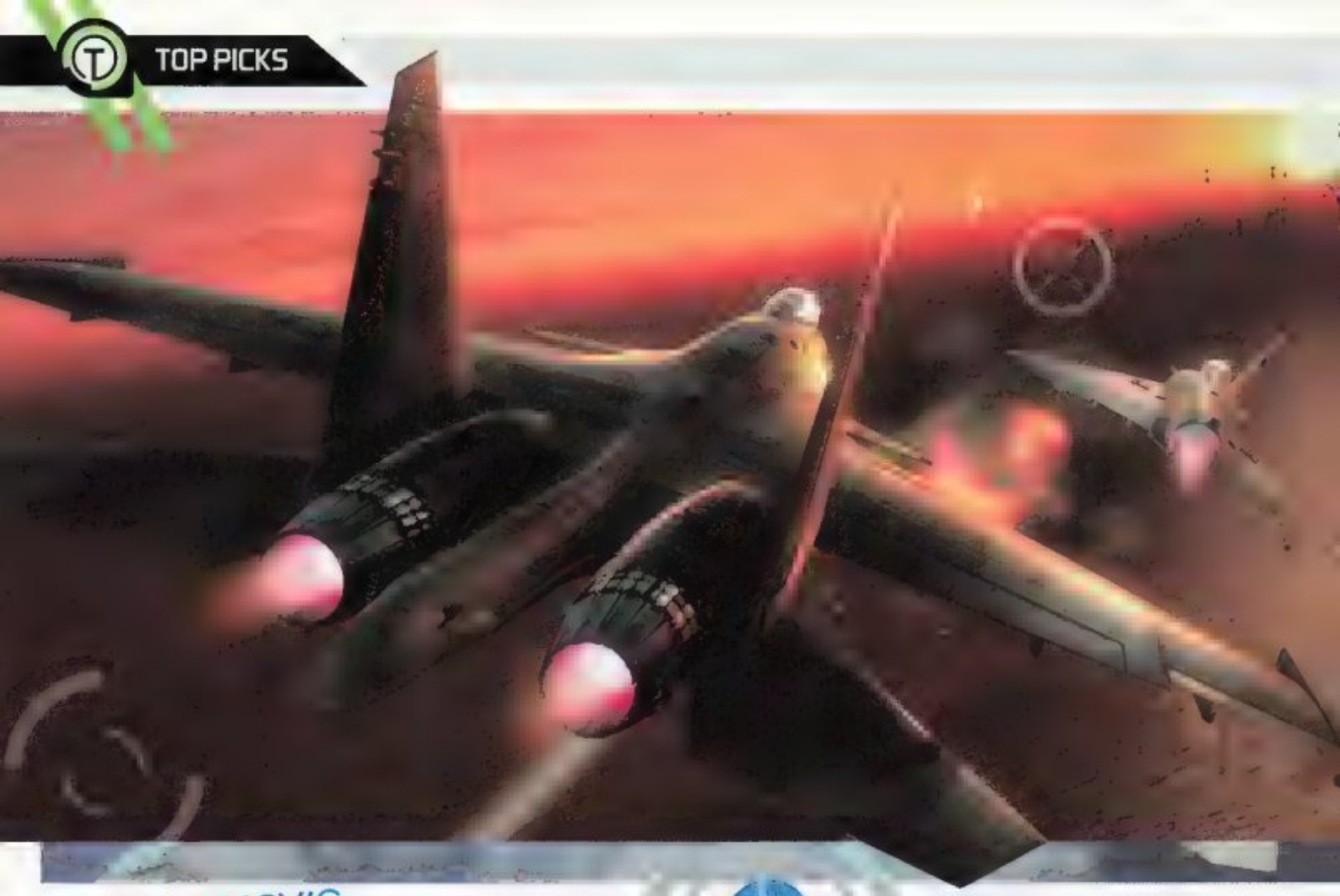
- Big wanzers mean big guns... and plenty of them
- Mech maneuvering is actually not so sluggish (unless you're over-packing your wanzer, of course)
- Easily accessible to veterans and newbies of third-person shooters

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- Occasionally long, repetitive boss battles

- Epic cinematics
- Fast-paced mechs
- Endless customization

OVERALL RATING: 4/5



TOM CLANCY'S H.A.W.X. 2

Almost an aerial ace... • Words: Mitch Dyer

You turn sharply, narrowly slipping between two radio towers, as a pair of heat-seeking missiles screech past your cockpit. You flip around, turn upside down, and blast a bogey to bits. You jam the airbrakes and pull up just in time to splash, but not sink. Whether accomplished individually or in a sequential string, these memorable moments make Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2 worth the frustration.

The glaring issue with the first H.A.W.X. was that it was really boring. Lengthy mission prologues meant you spent more time flying to your destination than fighting in it. H.A.W.X. 2 solves this with satisfying, speedy action. What little time this flight combat game wastes serves a purpose—unexciting openings invariably lead to explosive catalysts. The brevity of its introductions allows for almost-instantaneous, awesome action, without the need for an in-flight movie and a bag of peanuts.

Unfortunately, levels sometime run too long and fail to remain interesting. One of our favorite stages had us thinning enemy forces with remote rockets and clearing out the stragglers with carpet bombs. Another mission involved a hectic nighttime bombing run gone awry. Slower, but no less exciting, objectives let you catch your breath between main stages. The coolest of the bunch? Either passively scouting for a Splinter Cell agent or protecting Ghosts using a gunship. Yeah, the Clancy-crossover is out in full force.

Acute difficulty spikes and unclear objectives derail the otherwise excellent pace. After a handful of easy but exciting air battles, Ubisoft suddenly increases enemy aggression. The issue isn't that the bad guys hunt you down, it's that they obliterate the seemingly incompetent allies you've involuntarily sworn to protect.

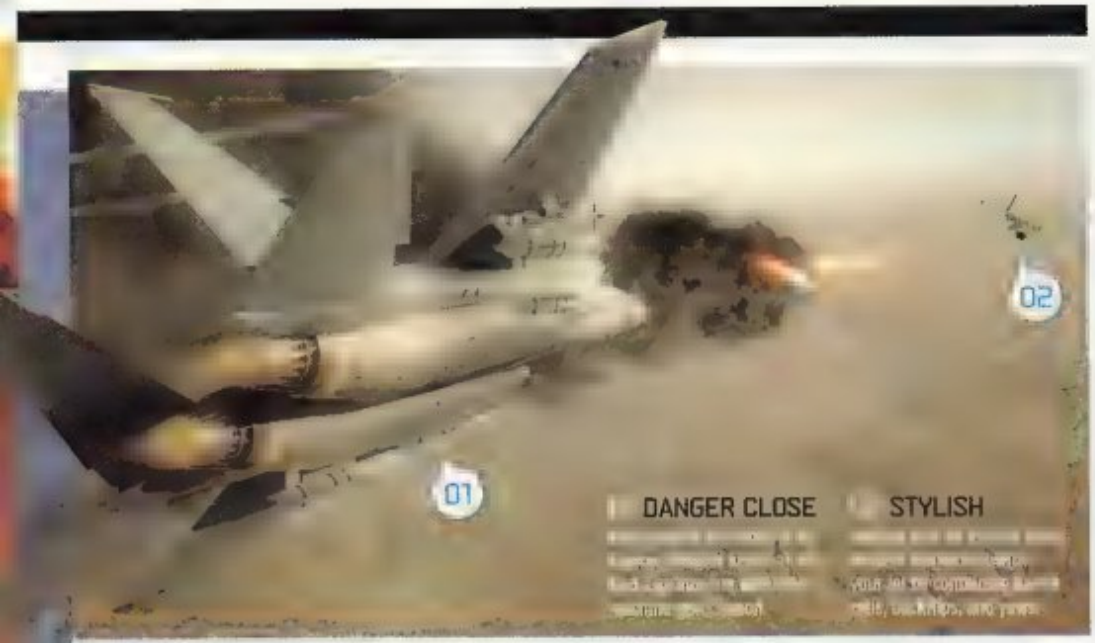
This wouldn't necessarily be a problem if it weren't a pattern. Instead of scaling to accommodate the game's four-player co-op mode, these brutal missions feel like they're built around it. Attacking offshore oil rigs while protecting allied aircraft carriers isn't a one-jet job, that's for sure.

With friends, H.A.W.X. 2 is another experience altogether. When you're competing for kills—and the experience points they bring in—you fly smarter and fight harder. This makes dogfighting easier and more rewarding for everyone involved.

The earned XP naturally levels you up, with each level unlocking an upgrade token. Where you invest these tokens—the large list of new planes, offensive abilities, and defensive boosts presents plenty of options—drastically affects how you interact with others in the top-notch competitive multiplayer.

H.A.W.X. 2 is an awesome, challenging action game tempered by its parabolic and unpredictable difficulty. Be sure to bring friends—the clouds are a dangerous place to fly alone.

WITH FRIENDS, *H.A.W.X 2* IS ANOTHER EXPERIENCE ALTOGETHER.



MULTIPL-AIR // H.A.W.X. 2's multiplayer does a great job of injecting interesting twists into formulaic game modes. For example, straightforward deathmatches aren't simply 4-on-4 bouts. The competitive teams battle against a common enemy as well.

AI foes harbor a small fortune in XP, and will attack both sides. Yeah, you're going to try to blow your buds out of the sky, but only so they don't scoop points out from beneath you. Certain multiplayer maps add a seemingly arbitrary barrier that limits altitude. But, as we quickly found out, these grounded battles in tight clusters of closely connected structures have their own exciting flow. We thoroughly enjoyed chasing enemies until one of us crashed, and gracefully squeezing between buildings to escape enemy gunfire.

PS3 XBOX 360 PC

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

TOM CLANCY'S H.A.W.X. 2

INFO
Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
1-4 player co-op locally and online, 2-8 player competitive online

GENRE
Flight combat

RELEASE DATE
September 7, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Top Gun fans, thrill seekers, and speed demons

EYE IN THE SKY

Ubisoft tapped into the power of GeoEye, a super-high-res space camera, to map out its phenomenal-looking environments. If you poke around the extras menu, you'll find all sorts of factoids about the company behind the GeoEye and other airborne shutterbugs. Check out GeoEye.com and you'll understand why H.A.W.X. 2 benefits from these awesome tools.

ANDY SAYS:

Good gameplay balance and pace are critical, and a flight-combat game's tuning is that much tougher. H.A.W.X. 2 improves over the first game, but could still be better. Maybe H.A.W.X. 3 will nail it.

EYE IN THE SKY

Ubisoft's *Rainbow Six* series pioneered the Persistent Elite Creation (P.E.C.) system used in *H.A.W.X. 2*. It's a handy means of keeping track of each branch of your personal progression, both in terms of what you've unlocked and what you can yet accomplish.

Experience points earned from destroying enemies and completing optional challenges—such as a perfect landing on an aircraft carrier—go into the same pot as XP earned online. This persistence gives each round of *H.A.W.X. 2* its own sense of satisfaction. So, whether you're replaying a story mission alone or tearing it up online, you're constantly contributing to a better you.

▼ A screenshot can't convey the intensity of flying through fiery explosions at 719 mph—nor the pee in our pants (TMI?).

WHAT'S GREAT:

- ❤ Fast, satisfying combat
- ❤ Memorable moments aplenty
- ❤ Plenty of awesome, varied multiplayer upgrades

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- ✖ Regular, frustrating difficulty spikes
- ✖ Numerous missions demand cooperative play
- ✖ Some too-lengthy missions

- Close calls
- Big bangs
- Fast flights

OVERALL RATING: 4/5

GAMEPLAY

01 BOMBIN'
Sitting in the pilot seat of a bomber is a calmer, but no less explosive, alternative to the breakneck pace of a MiG.

02 RIG PIG
The Oil City stage is a bit chaotic. We relied on *H.A.W.X. 2*'s "off mode" camera to get a better lay of the land.

03 WHAT CHANNEL?
If you pay attention to the picture-in-picture windows, you get an alternate view of incoming fire and other key threats.

04 KILLER VIEW
The snowy yet colorful Russian settings are consistently the best-looking areas in the whole game.

▲ One of NHL 2K11's new features may surprise you with a broken "twig."

NHL 2K11

It's not just the ice that causes this one to slip up. • Words: Andy Eddy

Take-Two Interactive, 2K Sports' parent company, announced in March that *NHL 2K11* was taking a "breather" from all game systems except the Wii. The expectation/assumption is that *NHL 2K12* will be stunningly good as a result of the one-year hiatus. On the other hand, this year's Wii game is all we'll have to play in the meantime.

Unfortunately, the game that recently hit store shelves is somewhat disappointing. My main complaint is that the designers tried to do too much with the controls, so even basic actions are complicated. Some features that are great for showing off (namely, the ability to carry the puck around the ice like a lacrosse ball), aren't too helpful in actual gameplay. *NHL 2K11* isn't easy to pick up and play.

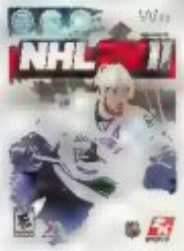
For those willing to stick it out, *NHL 2K11* does provide a lot. Detailed tutorials and drills help you hone your skills. For actual gameplay, there are myriad modes, including the ability to complete a single NHL season or multiple seasons in a Franchise mode; an NHL or international-style playoff tournament; and online leagues you can join or create. With an Internet link you can bring up a sports ticker, and also utilize the 2K Share section to upload and download Player DNA and rosters.

It also offers a more casual game called Road to the Cup, a party-style mode with trivia, mini-games, and hockey-ish activities for multiple players. The player who accrues the most "fans" wins. I found too many repeat questions in the trivia section, but otherwise it's a decent multiplayer diversion outside of *2K11*'s traditional hockey gameplay.

It's clear that *NHL 2K11* was built to be an epic, feature-filled hockey game for Wii owners. Sadly, the core of the game will be too hard for many players to reach.

Wii

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS



NHL 2K11

INFO
Publisher: 2K Sports
Developer: Visual Concepts
Platforms: Wii

MULTIPLAYER
Different modes that support up to 6 players online or 4 players on the same system

GENRE
Sports

RELEASE DATE
August 24, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Wii owners with a hockey jones

WHAT'S GREAT:
- NHL 2K11 offers a ton of gameplay modes
- An Internet connection brings you a lot
- The replay module is powerful

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- The controls on the Wii Remote are overly complex
- Series fans will be disappointed it's not on more consoles
- We won't know for a while what the hiatus will bring 2K12

GAMER
- Loaded
- Controller cramps
- Connected

OVERALL RATING: 3.5/5

DOME OF SHAME

The Zamboni-driving simulator, where you resurface as much of the ice as you can in three minutes, is a blast. I start with a complete path along the boards, which rings up over 30%. Then, like a real Zamboni driver, I make laps that are half the rink's width, shifting one "lane" over with each cycle. My best is 99.0%—who'll be the first to beat it?

WII-S

I'm not a big hockey fan, so it's easy to pass this one up. However, I can see how a Wii owner who bleeds hockey would want to squeeze out every drop of puck passion *NHL 2K11* has to offer.

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GEAR

90 Sony PlayStation Move Motion Controller

92 Galaxy GeForce GTX 460 Graphics Card

94 Mad Catz Cyborg R.A.T. 7 Gaming Mouse

95 Creative Labs World of Warcraft Gaming Headset

Where to purchase:

ONLINE OR IN-STORE

Some of these parts are available in-store while others are available at BestBuy.com. Be sure to check with your local store for availability.

WIL SAYS:

This month, we take a look at some awesome new accessories. The Mad Catz Cyborg R.A.T. 7 Gaming Mouse was a pleasant surprise and Galaxy's GeForce GTX 460 Graphics Card is no slouch. Creative's World of Warcraft Gaming Headset may be the ultimate accessory for the WoW freak in your life. And don't miss out on Sony's new Move Motion Controller.

Words: William O'Neal • Photos: Mark Medeo

INFO

MANUFACTURER:
Sony Computer Entertainment America
www.us.playstation.com

COMPATIBLE WITH:
PlayStation 3

RETAIL VALUE:
$99.99 for the PS3 Move bundle, which includes the Move Controller, the PlayStation Eye, and Sports Champions

RATINGS

- Wireless
- Intuitive
- Precise

OVERALL RATING: 5/5

SONY PLAYSTATION MOVE CONTROLLER

The Sony Move Controller is finally here and we'd be lying if we said that we weren't excited about it. Still, it's one thing to be excited about new technology and another thing entirely to get your hands on it and finally put it through its paces. We fired up the Move Controller and played a ton of games with it—the Move-enabled games that aim to showcase the controller, as well as several already-released games that boast added support for the device.

The hardware itself works quite well. Navigating the PS3's menu with the Move Controller is super-simple and intuitive. Additionally, the games that have been designed with the Move in mind were easy to pick up and play. The only disclaimer I'd offer is, the Move launch titles are incredibly casual and may not appeal to more hardcore gamers.

We also played some previously released games, such as *Tiger Woods PGA 11* and *Heavy Rain*. As a golf game, *Tiger Woods* is a perfect platform for the Move. And *Heavy Rain*'s somewhat old-school immersive gameplay is a natural fit. What remains to be seen is how the Move will translate to other, more hardcore games, such as *SOCOM 4*.

Simply put, we're extremely pleased with the hardware, and the relatively low cost of entry (when compared to Microsoft's Kinect) makes the Move a welcome addition to our PlayStation 3 setup.

The Move button is your key to everything in-game. You'll use it to access special features and navigate through the menu system. **$49.99**

You hold the Navigation Controller in your left hand and use it to move around. **$29.99**

To recharge the battery, simply plug your PS3's USB cord into the bottom. Each charge should get you about 10 hours of gameplay.

Words: William O'Neal

The PlayStation Eye is the lynchpin of the whole Move configuration, tracking the signal from the Move Controller with extreme precision.
$39.99

Not only does the PlayStation Eye pick up signals from the Move Controller, but it's also how you'll be recorded when you post those embarrassing videos online.

The Move has support for up to four Controllers at the same time. The device vibrates and blinks when it's that player's turn, and each player's Move Controller lights up a different color.

GALAXY GE FORCE
GTX 460 GRAPHICS CARD

Nvidia was late to the DirectX 11 party, and its belated offering wasn't exactly a stunner. Fermi—as embodied in the GeForce GTX 480—was hot, loud, expensive, and sucked up power like it was water in a desert.

The GeForce GTX 460 at the heart of this Galaxy card is a slimmed-down version of the Fermi core. It has fewer shader cores, fewer transistors, and it's physically smaller. This renders the part less powerful than the GTX 480, but a whole lot cheaper to manufacture.

If you go shopping for a GTX 460 card, make sure you're comparing apples to apples: There are boards with 1GB of GDDR5 memory—including this one—and boards with 768MB of GDDR5. A GTX 460 paired with 1GB of memory has a 256-bit memory interface, while chips paired with 768MB have a narrower 192-bit bus. A GTX 460 on a 1GB card also has more raster output processors (ROPs) than a 768MB card (32 versus 24).

Galaxy slightly overclocks the GPU and the memory to create this GC version, running the GPU at 700MHz and the frame buffer at 1,400MHz (compared to the reference specs of 675MHz and 1,350MHz). The result is a strong challenge for AMD's Radeon HD 5850.

Galaxy designed a decidedly non-reference shroud for the GeForce GTX 460 GC's dual-slot heat-sink and fan.

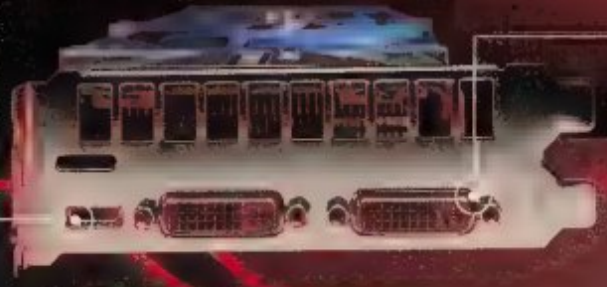
The GTX 460 consumes less power than a GTX 480, but it still requires more juice than the PCI Express bus can provide.

Words: Michael Brown

	Geforce GTX 460 GC	XFX Radeon HD 5850	PNY Geforce GTX 480
	24.90	7.70	39.90
	56.18	56.45	53.05
	29.11	52.04	46.91
	16.65	17.97	62.17

Galaxy's removable fan is more gimmick than innovation, but it does make it easy to blow dust out of the heatsink.

We'd complain about this mini-HDMI port a lot more if Galaxy didn't throw a six-foot cable in the box.



We know that DVI-D ports are ubiquitous, but DisplayPort is so much more compact.

THE GEFORCE GTX 480 IS FASTER THAN AMD'S TOP-SHELF PRODUCT.

INFO

MANUFACTURER:
Galaxy Microsystems Ltd.
www.galaxytech.com

COMPATIBLE WITH:
PCI Express

RETAIL VALUE:
$249.99

RATINGS:
- Fast
- Quiet
- Attractive

OVERALL RATING:
4/5

Words: William O'Neal

MANUFACTURER
Mad Catz
www.madcatz.com

COMPATIBLE WITH
PC, Mac

RETAIL VALUE
$99.99

RATINGS
- Customizable
- Precise
- Sturdy

OVERALL RATING
5/5

The pinky rest is shockingly useful.

The R.A.T. 7 comes with multiple palm rests.

Use the Precision Aim button to slow things down when sniping.

The metal chasis gives the R.A.T. 7 a sturdy feel.

MAD CATZ CYBORG R.A.T. 7 GAMING MOUSE

The problem with aftermarket "gaming mice" is that pretty much every computer comes with a mouse that works just fine. Still, when the folks at Mad Catz wanted to send us their Cyborg R.A.T. 7 Gaming Mouse, we said, "Sure, go ahead," because we've seen countless gaming mice and were prepared to be unimpressed.

Boy, were we wrong...this thing is awesome.

At first glance, everyone who sees the R.A.T. 7 makes the obvious Transformers joke. The thing is, all of those panels and buttons actually serve a purpose. Built around an aluminum chasis, the R.A.T. 7 is pretty heavy, and it also has additional weights. It also comes with interchangeable palm rests (slick black, rubber, and raised), as well as thumb and pinky rests. Of course, I never thought I'd need thumb and pinky rests, but now that I've used them, I'm sold.

At $99.99, the R.A.T. 7 is not cheap. But if you're a hardcore PC gamer, you'll love it.

Words: Heather Barron

WORLD OF WARCRAFT
WIRELESS HEADSET

We wore these babies for hours on end during testing.

The microphone angle isn't as adjustable as we'd have liked.

Not feeling the Horde? Replace the snap-in cup lens with Alliance iconography.

If your love for WoW necessitates WoW-branded gear then Creative Labs has your back with its WoW Wireless Headset. But you'll have to exercise patience at first, as they take a whopping eight hours to charge the first time. At least you can use them while they charge, albeit with wires.

With interchangeable ear cup lenses, you can flaunt your love for either the Horde or the Alliance and if you aren't a fan of the default blue and red lights, it's easy to go into the audio control panel and choose your own color. The most notable feature of the dashboard is VoiceFX, which transforms your voice to sound like a number of *World of Warcraft* characters from Orcs to Blood Elves. You may not use them often, but they're hilarious to toy around with. But beware of anything that emits sound, because the mic will capture it all. When testing out the VoiceFX on Ventrilo, it sounded like a party of Dwarves had taken over my apartment.

This model doesn't offer anything new—arguably the best feature, a WoW-branded push-to-talk pedal, is sold separately. The clear and customizable sound is the major selling point. The audio capabilities are on par with other high-end headsets, but in the end it comes down to how dedicated to *World of Warcraft* you are.

Set the light color via software—very cool.

INFO

MANUFACTURER:
Creative Labs
www.creative.com

COMPATIBLE WITH:
PC

RETAIL VALUE:
$160.00

RATINGS

- Wireless
- Versatile
- Comfy

OVERALL RATING

3/5

If you have some videogame "facts" you want to verify as real or urban legend, ask Andy: Send your questions to andy@atgamermagazine.com.

These games... they're a gas!

The term "vaporware" is descriptive of a particular segment of tech products—namely, those that the average person will never see or hold or be able to purchase from a store. Sometimes, it's the end result of tried-and-failed product development. At other times, it's a little shrewder than that, with a company announcing that a product is coming, then gauging the reaction to determine how much demand there may be for that particular product, which could result in the product being manufactured...or killed before any money is spent.

This month's *Truth or Lies* looks at a couple of notable vaporware instances in the game industry that may have had the same end result, but took drastically different paths on the way to their respective disappearances.

TRUTH OR LIES:

My friend told me about having played a bootleg of a fighting game called Thrill Kill, and he said that it never actually came out in stores. Is he telling truth or lies?

TRUTH

About a dozen years ago, a game called *Thrill Kill* was in development by Paragon Development, and was slated to be published by Virgin Interactive for the original PlayStation. The game was, for the time, an ultra-violent fighter with over-the-top characters and finishing moves that was intended to blow far past the boundaries that Mortal Kombat established a few years earlier with its free-flying splatters of blood—except on the Super NES, where the red blood was re-colored as gray "sweat" to meet Nintendo's requirement of less gory content—and gruesome Fatalities.

Though being acquired by Electronic Arts would normally be a good thing—a developer and its projects can benefit from all the resources that a publishing giant has—in this case, the results were different. *Thrill Kill* came with Virgin and Westwood Studios (best known for its Command & Conquer games) in EA's purchase of the companies, and the project wasn't well received at all. Not only was the game deemed by EA as "unfit" for it to publish, the company took a further moral stand by saying that it also wouldn't sell the title to another publisher to release. The game was deader than one of its dismembered characters.

Or maybe not. Suddenly, not long after EA's decision to kill *Thrill Kill* was announced, some members of the gaming press received copies, and other illicit copies of the game started appearing on the Internet. One of the most anticipated games never to make it to store shelves was still managing to find an audience.

Thrill Kill lived on in another way: Paragon used the game engine that powered it in other games, such as *Wu-Tang: Shaolin Style*. And Paragon itself was purchased by Midway—which later suffered a fiscal fatality of its own.

I'm having a debate with a buddy—I say there was a StarCraft game for PlayStation and Xbox; he says there wasn't. Each of us is sure that the other is wrong, but we'll leave the final verdict to you.

TRUTH

The fact is, both of you are correct...in a sense. *StarCraft: Ghost* was formally announced by Blizzard at the Tokyo Game Show in 2002 as a "tactical-action console game" scheduled for release in late 2003 on "multiple console systems," which everyone figured would be GameCube, PlayStation 2, and Xbox.

The game subsequently was shown at various trade shows to everyone's excitement...but it also had a few publicly announced delays and even saw changes to what studio was developing it.

In the end, *StarCraft: Ghost* just sort of disappeared, exiled to a limbo that Blizzard called "indefinite hold."

And before you get too excited about the recently released *StarCraft II* making the trip to consoles, Blizzard's own FAQ states, "We have no current plans to bring the game to any console platform." Someday, maybe, perhaps...

Tell us what you think of @GAMER in this quick 5-question survey http://tiny.cc/FirstToKnow

TEEN T
Lyrics
Mild Fantasy Violence
Mild Suggestive Themes
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

NEVERSOFT Vicarious Visions ACTIVISION.

*Guitar and Band Bundles only, while supplies last. $20 Live Nation Concert Cash valid 9/28/10 - 12/30/10.

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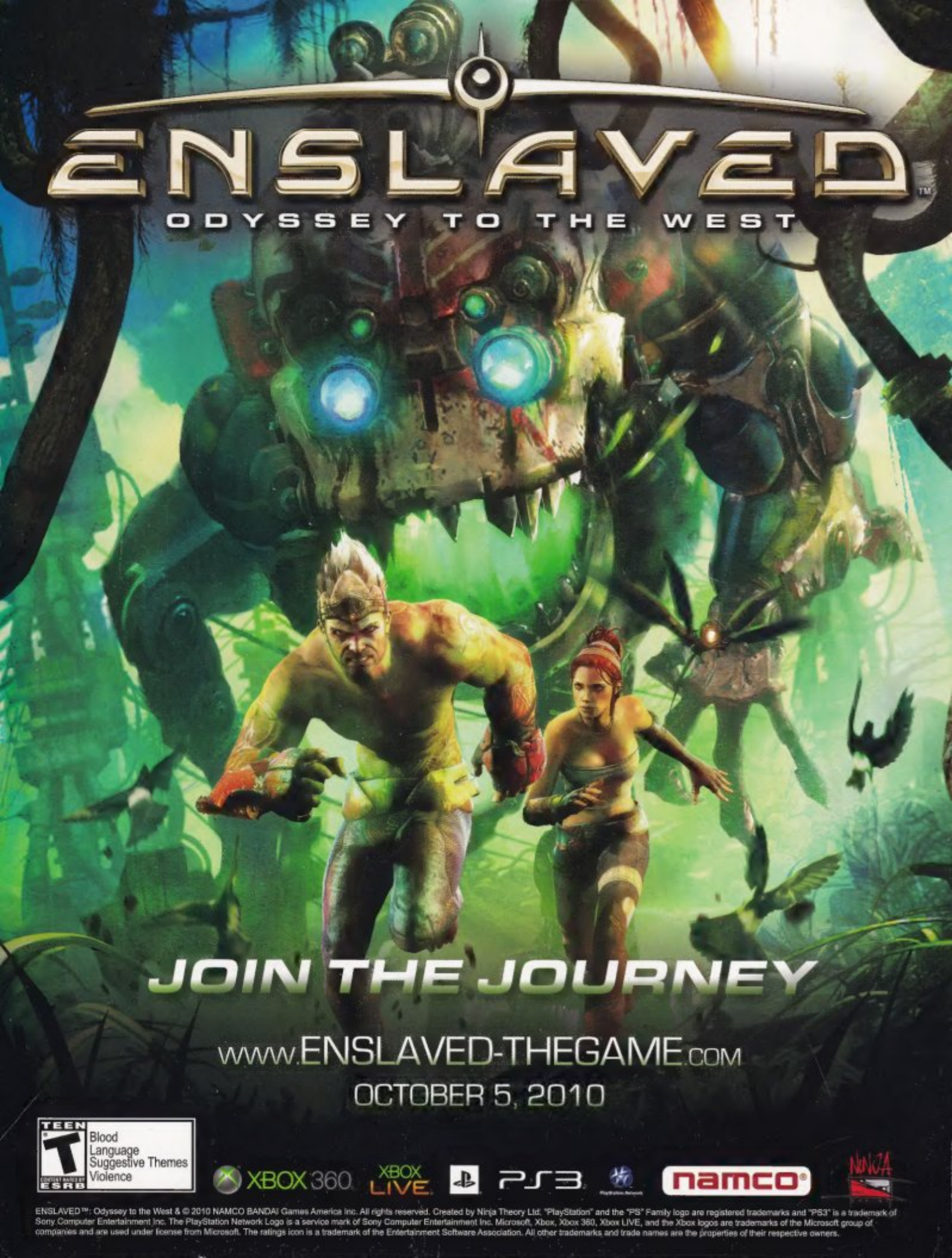

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